

# Paradox as Catalyst

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Art, Ephemera, Installation, Activism, Festival  
and Environmental Critique

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## **Abstract**

This project investigates site-specific, ephemeral installation with environmental discourse. The exploration began in response to factional debates surrounding the proposed Tamar Valley Gunns Paper Pulp Mill, which involved clear-fell logging and subsequent degradation of water catchment areas. Tasmania is a site for continuous factional debates surrounding environmental protection and potentially ecological destructive commercial ventures. The scope of this project has emerged from the conflict evidenced through human interaction with planet Earth's finite resources and lack of respect for global ecological fragility.

References to every-day objects, popular symbolism, the beautiful and the sublime are calculated to inspire awe and deep reverence. The work's beauty and/or grandeur lures audience to an initial engagement and uses metaphorical titles to reference concepts and discourses. The works employ a variety of techniques and site determines scale.

As the project developed, the tree, as subject and art object, became a primary focus. Some works were placed in bush settings only accessible by foot, allowing for a holistic saturation of the senses to accompany the experience. This strategy was intended to inspire a connection with Nature.

To further highlight environmental critique, community space and the landscapes attached to eco-festivals were ideal sites for the works. This included festivals with a visual art focus and festivals with a music and arts focus supported by an eco-sustainability ethos. Installing in public and the organised artist talks included in some of the festivals, added to the didactic and scope for activism.

The exegesis provides the context for this investigation. It examines art and environmental critique, land art, earth art and environmental art in historical context, ephemera, installation, sustainable practice, festival and the public sphere.

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## Introduction

The project centres on ephemeral installations with environmental critique, using festivals as a platform. Research is undertaken from 2009 to 2013. The project expands to eco-festivals as a new platform for environmental art. The exegesis examines the project within the context of environmentalism, installation, site-specificity, and sustainable practice.

Many artists living in regional Tasmania draw inspiration from the unique natural environment. Tasmania's landscape has featured widely in artworks and publications since early colonial history. Often sublime beauty is highlighted. Well known examples are painters such as John Glover, (1767 - 1849) and photographers such as Peter Dombrovskis, (1945 – 1996). Tasmania also has the reputation for boutique fine crafts that include textiles, ceramics, indigenous shell necklaces and fine furniture fashioned from unique Tasmanian timbers.

The environmental impact of the proposed Tamar Valley Pulp Mill was the catalyst for this project. Local artists became concerned about the preservation of Tasmania's unique environment, as will be discussed in the first chapter. Being an artist and sixth generation Tasmanian, I am inherently influenced by the beauty of the Tasmanian landscape. Immersed in family cultures where care and appreciation of nature was important, we supported a balance between conservation and sustainability, land management and preservation of natural habitat. I was deeply concerned about clear-fell harvesting of forests, the increase of eucalypt plantations and depletion of farming land.

Underpinning the project is the belief that on one hand, land management must ensure a growing supply of food and other resources to human populations. On the other side of the argument, management of land to procure these resources is linked with potentially negative consequences in the form of pollution, loss of biodiversity and climate change.

In a contemporary environmental context, there seemed no validity in joining the many artists who continued the tradition of beauty and tranquil 'wilderness' landscape images, when destructive undercurrents were omnipresent. The ubiquity was a catalyst to explore art as environmental activism and the work became my voice in a contemporary social context. Several movements in contemporary art focus on environmental discourses and

are known as Land Art, Earth Art and Environmental Art. These movements often counter-pose themselves philosophically to public monumental sculpture when thoughtlessly placed in a location and as well as gallery regimes. This is discussed further in Chapter Two.

Many environmental activists and agencies are benevolent. To respect this consideration, the ephemeral installations for the purpose of environmental activism were made to be experienced, not permanent and not a commodity for sale. Ephemeral installation became the chosen mode of expression to state this counter-position. This circumnavigated the contradiction of art with environmental sustainability discourse, art as commodity and contributed to the activism in the work.

The exegesis provides the context for this investigation, beginning with some background leading to the project, (Chapter One), followed by an examining art as environmental critique and environmental art in historical context, (Chapter Two), and festivals and the public sphere, (Chapter Three). Ephemera, installation, sustainable practice are discussed in Chapter Four within the context of the artworks that were undertaken during the project.

## **Chapter One**

### ***Preamble***

### **Background**

Born in Tasmania, and currently living in Launceston, it is inevitable that I am exposed to points of view from both sides of the environmental debate. Being a lover of nature, in a world of escalating concerns for global sustainability and bio-sustainability, I express an environmentalist activist point of view. The works demonstrate respect, and appreciation of nature processes, the necessity of reduction of carbon emissions and preservation of biodiversity.

Limited global resources and global climate change is a contemporary topical discourse. Eco-activism for bio-diversity and positive solutions to sustainable living practices underline the project. Environmental critique through site specific ephemeral installation, using art as the voice, the personal as political, is central to the scope of the research contextualised within contemporary arts practice.

### ***Shadows in the Water, 2005: Art as Voice and as Activism***

"Artists to my mind are the real architects of change, and not the political legislators who implement change after the fact." (Burroughs, 1977, <http://artquotes.robertgenn.com>)

Tasmania's environmental politics was the initial catalyst for the scope of this project. Using art to voice environmental discourse began for me in 2005. Together with an artist collective who united to exhibit their art as activism, we drew attention to degradation of the Upper Esk water catchment area as a result of logging practices. The exhibition was located on a small farm in the Upper Blessington area resulting in the environmental sculpture trail titled *Shadows in the Water*. The Environmental art works were exhibited during the Tasmanian arts festival, Ten Days On The Island and a CD produced as a record of the event.

Disaffiliation with Ten Days On The Island occurred in 2003, when Tasmanian artists and performers refused to participate in the event, rejecting Forestry Tasmania's attempt to become a major sponsor. The sponsorship was seen by many as an attempt to buy the silence of artists. At the time, Premier Jim Bacon labelled the dissenting artists as cultural

fascists. During the inaugural festival, in 2001, forty-six artists wrote an open letter to the Tasmanian Premier. They were expressing their concerns regarding Forestry Tasmania's policy of old growth logging and calling for money to replace Forestry Tasmania's sponsorship of Ten Days On The Island. Mr Evan Rolly, then Managing Director of Forestry Tasmania, spoke to ABC radio expressing surprise at the artists stand and stating that there had been no protest to their sponsorship in the previous, inaugural year. A crowd of three thousand five hundred people were addressed by concert pianist Roger Woodward and writer Dr Margaret Scott and later marched through the streets of Hobart to protest against old growth logging.



Plate 1

*Styx-Valley-logging-and-burn.*

Photo: R.Blakers,  
2012

The Art for Forests protest is one of numerous examples of art as environmental protest in Tasmania, (*Artists for Forests* - Earthbeat, 2002). Exhibitions such as *Future Perfect*, (2003), populating galleries and shop windows around North Hobart, notably distinguished itself from Ten Days On The Island, as an exhibition where writers, thinkers, and visual artists 'can explore our island (Tasmania) unsullied by the sponsorship of forces that sponsor the destruction of what is unique and irreplaceable on our island.', (Catalogue, Bett and Castles, 2003, p 1).

### **Tasmania - 'A Jewel in the Crown'**

Tasmania, as a tourist destination, is promoted as 'the natural state', the 'island of inspiration', and 'a world apart', owing to the retention of some of its relatively unspoiled natural environment. At 68,401 square kilometres in size, almost forty-five percent of Tasmania now lies in reserves, national parks and World Heritage sites. Tourists visiting Tasmania are invited to engage with wilderness and wildlife, discover places that have remained unspoilt for thousands of years, explore landscapes that are promoted as unique by world standards, walk along white beaches, relax in luxurious resort spas and relish



local food, wines, beers and ciders renowned the world over. Tasmania is promoted as a 'photographer's paradise', an 'unspoilt playground' of spectacular sights, a place of scenery 'unlike anywhere else' and possessing the 'cleanest air you'll ever experience'. With many recognised world-class experiences throughout the island to choose from, it is little wonder Tasmania is on a must visit holiday list, (Travel website, Discover Tasmania, 2013).

Tasmania's dramatic scenery is a unique environment and has the world's last great temperate wilderness. Geographically and genetically isolated, the island is known for its unique flora and fauna. It has extremely diverse vegetation, including heavily grazed grassland, tall, dry sclerophyll forests, alpine heath lands, large areas of unique cool temperate rainforests and moorlands in the rest of the state. Many are related to species in South America and Africa through ancestors which grew on the super continent of Gondwana, 50 million years ago.



Plate 2

Centurion - Arve Big Tree,  
Tasmania: Highest known  
mountain ash and eucalypt in the  
world discovered less than five  
kilometres from Forestry  
Tasmania's Tahune Airwalk  
tourism attraction.

Height: 99.6 m, diameter 4.05 m,  
girth circa 12.73 m, volume 268  
m<sup>3</sup>. Has been at least 103 m tall  
but the top is broken.

Since colonisation, Tasmania's industries have included whaling, shipbuilding, wool, mining (including gold, copper, zinc, tin, and iron), agriculture and forestry. This is a paradox and opposes the protection of 'nature' and 'wilderness'. In the 1940s and 1950s a hydro-industrialisation initiative was embodied in the state by Hydro Tasmania. The state has a large number of food exporting sectors, including (but not limited to) seafood. These all experience varying fortunes and the state has ebbs and flows of population dependent upon the dominant industries and markets of the time.

There is a history of controversy and community division on large environmentally contentious projects. In the 1970s, the state government announced plans to flood environmentally significant Lake Pedder. As a result of the eventual flooding of Lake Pedder, the world's first 'green' party was established; the United Tasmania Group.

Several decades of polarised debate on conservation issues has led the Tasmanian community to equate environmental management with conservation, which is fundamentally wrong. Environmental management is complex and nuanced with the desired outcome to strike a balance, to lessen impact and provide sustainable solutions. Due to the long history of conservation debates, the distinction between conservation and environmental management is not entirely understood by the public, making them vulnerable to manipulation and scare campaigns from pro-industrial groups. Simplistic demands to accept a project can easily override complex considerations. One of these dual-sided issues has been Tasmania's forest resources and the wood-chip industry. Where some see beauty, others see opportunity.

### **The Tree**



Plate 3

*Children And Dogs On  
Huon  
Road Southern Tasmania –  
1880, Tasmania In Black  
And White, Jeff Crowe,  
(1880 - 1955)*

The first permanent sawmilling operation in Tasmania was established on the slopes of Mt Wellington by Peter Degraives, shortly after his arrival in 1824. Other sawmilling operations followed and by 1880, sixty-two sawmills were operating throughout the state. Throughout the nineteenth century, there was no control of logging, so extensive stands of forest were cut without caution. It was at this time, scientist Julian Tenson expressed

alarm, warning that unless the government took action, the forests of Tasmania would be a thing of the past. Heeding this warning, in 1881, the Wastelands Act of 1863 that had made it possible for further licensing for forest activities, was amended providing for land reservation for the preservation of timber. However, reservation and policing were not well organised and the management of forests was considered chaotic. Four years later the first legislation dedicated to the management of Tasmanian forests allowed the appointment of a Conservator of Forests who was to take overall responsibility for state forestry. 1890 saw the Crown Lands Act repealed and consolidated, along with the Waste Lands Act, and State Forests Act of 1885. The Forestry Act, (1920), established the Tasmania Forestry Department, (Forestry Commission of Tasmania Forestry and Tasmania's Forests, 1976, p 1).

Information and publications on this topic can also be found in texts such as *Patriots: Defending Australia's Natural Heritage 1946-2004*, (Lines, 2006); *Out of Control: The tragedy of Tasmania's forests*, (Flanagan, 2007); *Tasmania's Wilderness Battles*, (Buckman, 2008); *Wild Rivers*, (Peter Dombrovskis and Bob Brown 1983) and *Wild Forest*, (Rob Blakers, Wilderness Society, 2008).

### **Gunns Tamar Valley Paper Pulp Mill**

Historically, in 1989, the first bid to establish a pulp mill at Wesley Vale, Tasmania, was rejected, subject to local opposition, due to its use of elemental chlorine as the main bleaching chemical. At about the same time, significant changes in bleaching technology and waste water treatment in relation to Kraft pulp mills were also being made throughout the world (CSIRO, 1994). The Wilderness Society (TWS), Environment Tasmania and the Australian Conservation Foundation welcomed the Gunns' pledge to improve effluent standards. They promised to support them if the details released by Gunns matched the commitment but they agreed that the conservationist community would never give social approval for the mill. TWS spokesman Vica Bayley has said that they would never approve the contentious pulp mill, regardless of any future changes to its design or operations, citing the corrupted approval process making it forever unacceptable. This new tough stance by the TWS coincided with further splits emerging between Tasmanian environmental groups over the failure to halt logging in all high-conservation-value forests in an immediate moratorium. Dr Phill Pullinger of Environment Tasmania stated in March 2011 that "It's not a proposal that we'll ever be in a position that we'll endorse or support." (7.30, ABC, 2011). The website *McGunns*, (<http://www.mcgunns.com/>, 2013), logs, in detail, this recent history of Gunns' bid to build a pulp mill in the Tamar Valley and the active public fight against it.





Plate 4

Public protest in  
Launceston Tasmania,  
2011

Photo: J Anglesey,



Plate 5

Public protest in  
Launceston Tasmania

Photo: J Anglesey, 2011

### **The Paradox**

The ongoing push for an unsustainable paper pulp industry versus the protection of native forests, diversity of species, arable land and water quality, leaves an unmistakeable impression. Gunns and Forestry Tasmania promoted the benefits of the mill, while others objected to the pollution, questioned its sustainability and methods used to supply timber to feed it. The threat to adjacent agriculture and delicate eco-systems in the Tamar Valley was ignored, as was the downturn in the woodchip and paper pulp global market. The

pulp mill was promoted and given state government financial support despite considerable public protest and no official public mandate.

## **Chapter Two**

### ***Art and Environmental Critique***

In a bold sense the term environmental art is used in two different contexts; it can be used generally to refer to art dealing with ecological issues and/or the natural, such as the formal, the political, historical, or social context. Contemporary ephemeral art installation and art with environmental critique has an historical context.

Research has centred on artists who opt for non-object based practices such as performances, ephemeral actions and interventions in public space, which despite their form may have strong resonances among the public. The artists chosen for this exploration have clear conviction and long term practices negotiating this thematic.

From 2003 to 2008, and for the project, 2009 to 2013, I have undertaken research into ephemeral installations focusing on environmental critique. Escalating polarised environmental debates surrounding the sustainability of logging native forest, environmental activism and Tasmania's forest industry was the stimuli and catalyst for the work.

To widen audience and contribute to critical environmental discourse, the scope of the research included the platform of community arts festivals including Townsville's Strand Ephemera, Tasmania's Ten Days On The Island and Launceston's Streets Alive. Explorations included expansion into the public sphere of cultural festivals, specifically the Marion Bay Falls Festival and Jackeys Marsh Forest Festival, both underpinned by 'green' principals and practice. Sites were chosen to highlight the critique. Festivals and the associated public sphere are discussed further in the exegesis. The following discourse operates to contextualise the work in terms of the chosen mode of site specific ephemeral installation with environmental critique.

### **Environmentalism and Art - Historical Context**

In historical and social terms in the 'West', from the nineteenth century forward, modernity promoted the belief that human progress is measured and evaluated in terms of the domination of nature and the history of human society as a narrative of unending progress. *Contested Natures*, examines nature and society drawing attention to a 'dichotomisation of nature and society', (Macnaghten, Urry, 1998, p 7). They highlight deficiencies that have led to exploitation of land and landscapes. They also explore the historical development of contemporary environmentalism, focusing on four key stages of

development leading to a current position in the social agenda. The first, post-war concern with nature was geared towards growing capitalist industrialisation and use of global resources. The second sees the emergence of the idea of environmental threat, linked to the dominant values of modernisation and technological progress in the 1960s, reflected in counter-cultural movements. This led to a third phase, the 1970s, '80s and '90s, when the global environmental challenge was endorsed by state institutions. However it was essentially engaged in a struggle for proof, progressively raising the stakes of diagnosis to show critical damage, not just at an individual or local community level but globally. The fourth phase sees the development of the 'green' movement.

### **Art, Installation and Sustainability**

A favoured subject for artists and popular with viewers are beautiful landscapes depicting the wonders of the natural world. This is not suggesting all artists who engage with landscape are devoid of political commentary. The scope of environmental critique provides an umbrella for a diversity of artistic and cultural practices both in and around environment. This project focuses on alternative modes of negotiating environmental critique in public spaces.

Artistic engagement in discursive environmental issues is a relatively recent phenomenon. The relevance of sustainable practice in contemporary art can be approached from different angles. We may consider the role of art in highlighting environmental issues, expressing criticism towards unsustainable factors in society, to offering ideas for how to achieve a sustainable lifestyle. To be concise we also need to turn eco-criticism back towards the practice of art itself, through examination of the environmental impact of the production of art. In addition to traditional media of painting and sculpture, contemporary artists, as part of their artistic practice, make use of a wide range of new technologies such as videos, films and internet, or choose to combine them in order to best convey ideas. The issue of sustainability in contemporary art practice implies the opportunity for artists to question the role of art in society and express environmental concern in their works, while at the same time it makes them aware of ecological, social and ethical dimensions of their practice.

### **Land Art, Environmental Art**

Parallel with the development of modern ecological awareness in the 1960s and '70s, art practice also underwent transformations. Artistic practice, here, corresponds to industrial society's experience in terms of alienation, separation and distance. Modernist art was oriented towards extracting natural features from their context by concentrating on their

formal properties, such as colour, shape and rhythm, with a radical separation of the artwork from everyday life. The modernist ideal of abstraction was envisaged for the purified atmosphere of a white gallery, not questioning the role of art and its position in society. As a consequence, artists began to look outwards to the public sphere, experimenting with art designed for natural settings, considering the political implications of art, and in some cases also responding, through their work, to the endangered state of the natural environment, (Murray, et. al., 2012, p 215).



Plate 6

Robert Smithson,  
*Spiral Jetty*, 1970.

Photo: George  
Steinmetz.



Plate 7

Richard Long

*Spiral Jetty* from atop  
Rozel Point, in mid-  
April 2005.

Among new movements that emerged in the 1960s, Land Art and Conceptual Art both have been influential in contemporary approaches to ecology in art. Land Art was instrumental in bringing art out of the gallery and placing it in a natural setting. Pioneer American artist Robert Smithson chose deserts and other remote locations for large scale interventions in the natural environment preferring 'damaged' or wasteland sites. However, this artist typically saw the landscape as a huge canvas, on which he used a



bulldozer instead of a paintbrush to create Earth Works. Criticism was raised against the European sculptor Christo, when he wrapped the coastline at Little Bay, south of Sydney, Australia, in 1969 and again when he temporarily surrounded islands with pink polypropylene fabric for *Surrounded Islands*, Biscayne Bay, Florida, 1980-83. Conservationists' comments attracted international attention in environmental circles, and lead to contemporary artists to re-think the inclinations of Land art and Site-specific art.



Plate 8

Christo

*Wrapped Coastline*,  
1969. Detail.

Conceptual Art of the 1960s and early 1970s abandoned objects and sought dematerialised ways of expressing artistic ideas, for example, using a text or an ephemeral action that very often left no trace in the world except for its documentation, but had the potential to make a strong artistic impression. Many of today's practising artists recycle the strategies of the early conceptual artists to stress the centrality of the concept or idea that their project aims to transmit.

### **Art with Environmental Critique: Examples**

This project relies on the historical precedent of decommodification of the art object in contemporary arts practice. Land, Earth, Conceptual and contemporary Environmental artists often use ephemeral installation as the mode of practice to underpin the critique in the work. In terms of environmental critique and sustainability, the last two decades demonstrate significant environmentally concerned works that have been made by artists. The following artistic projects illustrate some potential of contemporary art to generate innovative perspectives on environmental questions.

## Joseph Beuys

Beuys's project *7000 Oaks* began in 1982 at Documenta 7, the large international art exhibition in Kassel, Germany. He planted seven thousand trees, each paired with a columnar basalt stone approximately four feet high above ground, throughout the greater city of Kassel. The project was carried forward under the auspices of the Free International University (FIU) and took five years to complete. The last tree was planted at the opening of Documenta 8 in 1987.



Plate 9

Joseph Beuys

*7000 Oaks*, Kassel,  
1982



Plate10

Joseph Beuys

*7000 Oaks*, West 22nd  
Street between 10th  
and 11th Avenues in  
New York City, 2011  
Photo: Ken Goebel

Beuys intended the Kassel project to be the first stage in an ongoing scheme of tree planting to be extended throughout the world as part of a global mission to effect environmental and social change. Locally, the action was a gesture towards urban renewal.

### **Patrice Stellest, Erwin Timmers and Alison Sigethy**

Patrice Stellest is a Swiss contemporary artist, born in 1953. In 1993, Stellest worked with the assistant of Jean Tinguely Martin Bühler and artist physicist Bernard Gitton, on a new kind of art work conveying a message the protection of nature and the environment. He created big installations with junk, but also pertinent items collected around the world and used solar energy mechanisms. (<http://www.stellest.com>, p 1)

Washington, DC based glass sculptors Erwin Timmers and Alison Sigethy incorporate some of the least recycled building materials, for example, structural glass in their works. Timmers' sculpture calls attention to contemporary issues through a creative re-engineering of often-overlooked forms and concepts, often focusing on industrial salvage and recycling. (<http://www.ecoglassart.com>), Sigethy studied theatre and lighting design at Mason Gross School of the Arts at Rutgers University and received degrees in Art History and Interior Design from Marymount University. Sigethy says in her Artist Statement, "I create new and old life forms out of salvaged materials - primarily structural glass and found wood"..... "By creating pieces that can represent the contradictory ideas of beginning and end, rebirth and decay, without preference, I hope to create dialogue about the continuum of life and our place in it"....."My choice in glass is largely environmental - structural glass, which makes up the majority of all manufactured glass, is not recycled but buried in landfills - so using building glass is part of my mission." (<http://www.alisonsigethy.com>)

### **Richard Long**



Plate 11

Richard Long

Left: *Time walking*,  
1960

The committed Environmental artist, sculptor Richard Long, has for several decades made temporary outdoor sculptural work by rearranging natural materials found on the site, such as rocks, mud and branches, which will, therefore, have no detrimental environmental impact.





Plate 12

Richard Long

Left: *Walking a Line in Peru*, 1972

Over the decades, Long's work has created a language of simple geometric forms, marked on the surface of the earth with stones, water, dust or snow. The relationship with place is vital to Long's work and his 1977 Kaldor project in Australia was the first of several visits and projects connected to the Australian landscape.

(<http://kaldorartprojects.org.au/project-archive/richard-long-1977>)



Plate 13

Richard Long,

Left: *Box Hill Road River*, London, 2010

## Stan Herd

Born in 1950 in the small farming community of Protection, Kansas, Herd cultivated his talent from childhood, eventually landing an art scholarship from Wichita State University in 1969. Herd returned to his agricultural roots in 1976 pioneering an art form called crop art. Stan has created more than a dozen earthworks which include portraits of Native Americans, graphic still lifes, and *Countryside*, produced on New York's Manhattan

Island. Herd believes crop art provides a platform for discussing the roles of art combined with agriculture and the demands on our natural resources.



Plate 14

Stan Herd, *The Native American*, Kansas, 1981  
Photo: Jon Blumb

### John Davis

The Australian sculptor John Davis, (1936-1999), famously developed a new mode of Site-specific art at the Mildura Sculpture Triennial in the early 1970s. Arguably his most influential work, *Tree Piece*, (1973), was made by encasing the trunks of several growing trees on the banks of the Murray River with, alternately, papier mache, mud, latex, coiled string, plastic cling wrap, and twigs bound together. The impermanent work was then allowed to weather and rot away. It was a breakthrough which lead many sculptors to reconsider the fate of outdoor works and whether the fabrication of art might in some way adversely impact on the environment.



Plate 15

John Davis  
*Tree Piece*, (1973)



## Andy Goldsworthy



Plate 16 Above Left: Andy Goldsworthy, *Knotweed-stalks-Derwent-Water*, Cumbria. nd

Plate 17 Above Right: Andy Goldsworthy, *Dandelions newly flowered none as yet turned to seed undamaged by the wind or rain a grass verge between dual carriageways*, Neat West Bretton, Yorkshire. 1987

British sculptor Andy Goldsworthy similarly leaves the landscape he has worked with unharmed. Goldsworthy was born in Cheshire, England, in 1956 and currently resides in Scotland. He studied at Bradford School of Art and Preston Polytechnic and has been making art in the environment, both rural and urban, since the mid-1970s.



Plate 18 Above Left: Andy Goldsworthy, *Woven Branch* Langholm, Dumfriesshire, 1986

Plate 19 Above Right: Andy Goldsworthy, *Icicle Star*, nd

Goldsworthy has gained a significant reputation for both his ephemeral works and his permanent installations that draw out the endemic character of a place. The artist works with natural materials, such as leaves, sand, ice, and stone that often originate from the local site.

### Agnes Denes



Plate 20 Agnes Denes, *Rice/Tree/Burial with Time Capsule*, 1969

Artist Agnes Denes is a Hungarian-born American conceptual artist based in New York. She is known for works in a wide range of mediums - from poetry and philosophy writings, to complex hand and computer rendered. Denes was commissioned by Artpark, Lewiston, New York, in 1969, to create *Rice/Tree/Burial with Time Capsule*. Agnes planted rice to represent life (initiation and growth), chained trees to indicate interference with life and natural processes (evolutionary mutation, variation, decay, death), and buried her Haiku poetry to symbolize the idea or concept; the abstract, the absolute, human intellectual powers, and creation itself), (<http://www.agnesdenesstudio.com/>, 2011). Rice represented a universal substance referring to sustenance and the life-giving element, while the seed itself denoted the nucleus, first principle or cause—the beginning. This work was then re-enacted at Artpark from 1977 to 1979. Conceived in 1982, as part of a massive earthwork and land reclamation environmental project, Denes affirms



humanity's commitment to the future well - being of ecological, social and cultural life on the planet with *Tree mountain – A Living Time Capsule 11,000 trees, 11,00 people, 400 years*, (420 x 270 x 28 metres, 1992-1996 Ylöjärvi, Finland).

Designed to unite the human intellect with the majesty of nature, *Tree Mountain* is a huge manmade mountain, elliptical in shape and planted with eleven thousand trees by eleven thousand people from all over the world at the Pinzö gravel pits near Ylöjärvi, Finland.

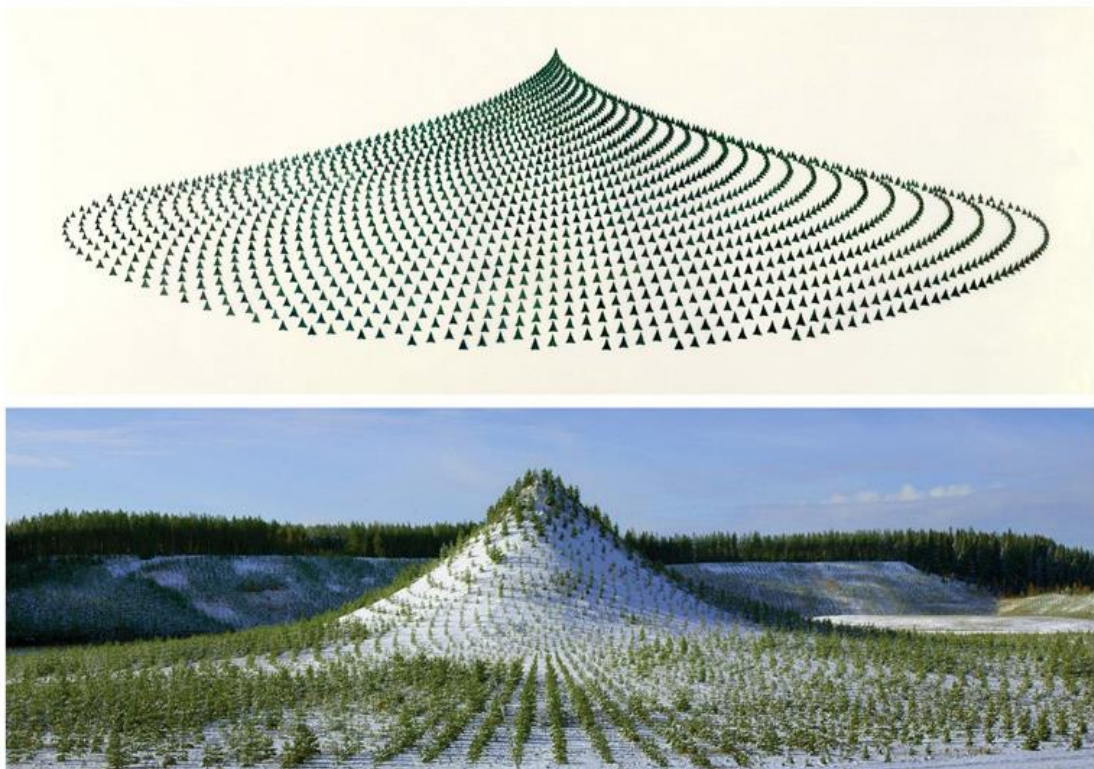


Plate 21 Above: Agnes Denes, *Tree mountain*, 1982

The project was officially announced by the Finnish government at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro on Earth Environment Day, June 5, 1992, as Finland's contribution to help alleviate the world's ecological stress. Sponsored by the United Nations Environment Program and the Finnish Ministry of the Environment, *Tree Mountain* is protected land to be maintained for four centuries, eventually creating a virgin forest. The trees are planted in an intricate mathematical pattern derived from a combination of the golden section and the pineapple/sunflower system and reminiscent of ancient earth patterns. People who planted the trees received certificates acknowledging them as custodians of the trees, (Kalela, 1996).



## **Alan Sonfist**

Responding to emerging environmental awareness, with a strong ecological dimension, was Alan Sonfist. Beginning with his first major commissioned work, *Time Landscapes*, in Greenwich Village, NYC, in 1965, Sonfist received critical acclaim for his use of urban spaces to design havens of nature. After extensive research into the native plants, geology and history of the area, Sonfist created a small park with native trees, shrubs, wild grasses and flowers to represent landscape as was enjoyed by Native Americans before the arrival of European settlers. This asserted art's ability to express powerful ideas about the loss of biodiversity through urbanisation. His early work in the 1960s and 1970s helped pioneer the burgeoning movement of site-specific sculpture. Today, he continues to promote sustainable energy and strives to raise awareness for global climate change with his international projects. In addition to his private and public commissions, Alan Sonfist also produces site-specific works for corporate commissions, many created for interior installation made to connect corporate facilities with their natural surroundings. These corporate commissions are comprised of entirely sustainable green art using existing materials from the location to expose the history of the site. Sonfist continues today to reinvent the primal conditions of the land that have been long since forgotten, giving the community his own brand of artistic bio-histories. Recently, Sonfist collaborated with Green City Planners in Pori, Finland and Tampa, Florida to create green public spaces.

## **Jill Chism**

In 2009, Jill Chism published *Water's Edge-Creating Environments*, as a result of placing the element of water at the centre of her art practice; the focus was increasing debate through its diminishing supply and pollution via toxic waste materials. Based near Cairns, Queensland, Chism began working solo, creating works near her home including Oak Beach, Pretty Beach and Possum Valley on the Atherton Tablelands. Chism also made works at sites on the eastern seaboard and inland fresh waterholes, including *Floating Land* and *North Keppel Island Environmental Art Project* in 2007. Development of the project in 2008 involved the participation of three regional galleries, Cairns regional Gallery, Perc Tucker Gallery and Artspace Mackay. These saw the inclusion of eight invited artists from within those regions.

Artists Susan Doherty, Tijn Meulendijks, Anthony Cuthbertson, Pam Lane, Barbara Pierce, Tracey Heathwood, Ashley Holmes and Ngaio Lenz joined the *Waters' Edge* project and examined 'the deeper blacker spaces of socio-political issues including the

misuse of water', (Chism, p3). They reflected on local and global issues of sustainability and water usage, and accumulation of toxic and plastic waste in oceans, such as the *Great Pacific Garbage Patch* where one hundred million tonnes of plastic accumulates in two vast linked areas. They worked in both pristine and damaged environments. Chism also formed partnerships with the Environmental Protection Agency at Cape Hillsborough and Broken River, local historians, conservation groups, caretakers Louise and Steve Collier on Low Isles and Ed Pearce a bird twitcher at Town Common.



Plate 22

Left: Jill Chism, *Chi for Gaia # 1*, detail, 2009

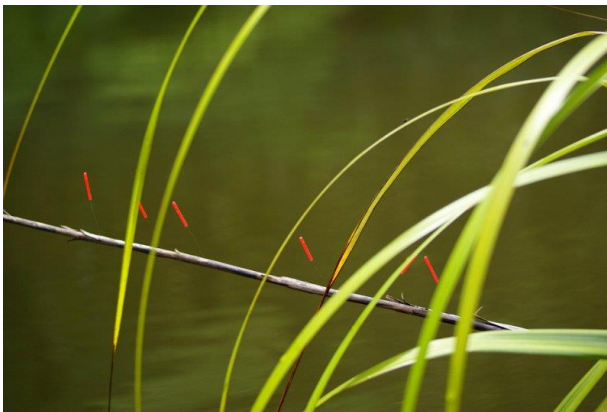


Plate 23

Below Left: Jill Chism *Chi for Gaia # 1*, 2009

One of Chism's works for the Waters' edge project, *Chi for Gaia #I and #II* is intriguing. Chism's partner is an acupuncturist, the principles of which she has applied in her art. Acupuncture is based on understanding of how life force Qi/Chi moves through living objects. This understanding led to experiments using acupuncture needles in the landscape. The sites chosen for *Chi for Gaia #I* varied from an ex-military exercise site used during WW2, to the dam at Possum Valley and also the delicate mangrove systems on Cape Tribulation beach. Chism's experiment with the idea of enhancing micro environments with more Qi/Chi was intended to enable nature to recover and flourish. *Chi for Gaia #II* expanded to include Geomancy, from *geomantieia*, which literally

translates to earth divination. Geomancy recognises the influence of the Earth's magnetic currents and the impact of living objects upon it (Chism, p 23). *Chi for Gaia #II*, used the principles of acupuncture with twenty human size copper rods, twelve rods for the twelve meridians or energetic pathways of the human body, and eight extraordinary pathways said to lie in the etheric field around the body to create a 'Geomantic cure', and to energise sites, (Chism, p 25).

### **Konstantin Dimopoulos**

In 2011, Konstantin Dimopoulos undertook a public installation titled *The Blue Trees*, to highlight the issue of deforestation and its impact on global warming. Dimopoulos has approached environmental critique in a very similar way to the *Rainbow* series in this project, drawing attention to the trees which breathe for the planet.



Plate 24

Konstantin  
Dimopoulos

*The Blue Trees*,  
2012, Houston, TX

Photo: Raine  
Arguelles

He has formulated a special biodegradable, ultramarine mineral pigment to colour trees, and conducts each installation with the help of local volunteers. He invites the public to join in the international conversation about deforestation by posting their commentary about the *Blue Trees* project on social media such as Instagram and Twitter. The project was first realised in Melbourne, Australia, then Vancouver, Canada and Dimopoulos is currently continuing to execute this work around the world. He says the project is intended to bring attention to the tree. Dimopoulos strives to address global deforestation of old growth forests and provides a visual platform to effect change. Dimopoulos believes that trees are largely invisible in our daily lives, and it's not until it's too late that we realise how important they are to us both aesthetically and environmentally. Through his project, Dimopoulos strives to elevate the role of trees from largely unnoticed, to objects of

appreciation. The project is ephemeral, with the coloured trees gradually reverting to their natural state over six months.

### **Chris Drury**

Chris Drury's work, *Medicine Wheel*, (1983), was the fruit and result of a daily meditative walk, for a calendar year. In this way, it can be said, the work of art arises out of sensitivity towards habitat.

### **Renewable energy sculpture**

Renewable energy sculpture is another recent development in environmental art representing a response to the increasing urgency in the global climate change debates. Generally the practice is evolving in public sculpture and to an extent in experimental architecture, the response is to make an explicit intervention at a functional level, merging aesthetic responses with the functional properties of energy generation or saving. This arts practice/eco-design merge further highlights the rapid expanding base of approaches to environmental critique in contemporary arts practice.

### **Environmental Critique - The Project**

I have employed several principles to highlight the critique to reduce the environmental impact of the art works, such as use of recycling and biodegradable materials. Biodegradability is demonstrated in *Paper and Gum*, *Overlayunderlay* and *Wattle Dance*. The materials used to make the work are then left to bio-degrade over varying time frames. The works leave no physical trace of their existence. To decrease the environmental impact of the *Rainbows* installation, the material used to wrap a tree is then removed and the fabric re-used at another site. The ephemeral nature of the works installed in landscape highlighted the power of nature to change, to restore, regenerate and remove traces of human intervention when left uninterrupted.

*Paper and Gum*, *Wattle Dance* and *Rainbows* highlighted the importance of trees to ecological equilibrium and sustainability. *Waist-Knot-Want-Not*, was made from recycled materials, (teabags), and utilised found objects from my home, 'on loan' to the work for the duration of the installation. As the project progressed, application of formal conceptual principles developed to include eco-sites to further define the environmental critique in the works. The next chapter explores the application of art placed in the public sphere, in this instance, expansion into community festival and eco-festival sites, as ideal platforms to underpin environmental critique and art activism in the work.



## Chapter Three

### Festival: A Platform for Installation Art and Environmental Critique

“Many environmental artists now desire not merely an audience for their work but a public with whom they can correspond about the meaning and purpose of their art.”, (Beardsley, 1998, p 127).

The growth of public art stimulates artists to engage with the urban landscape. This provides a platform to disseminate ideas and concepts about the environment to a larger audience. Exhibitions based on the theme of ‘green’ and ‘environmental’ art have risen in popularity; reflecting escalating, local and global polarised debates surrounding environmental sustainability.

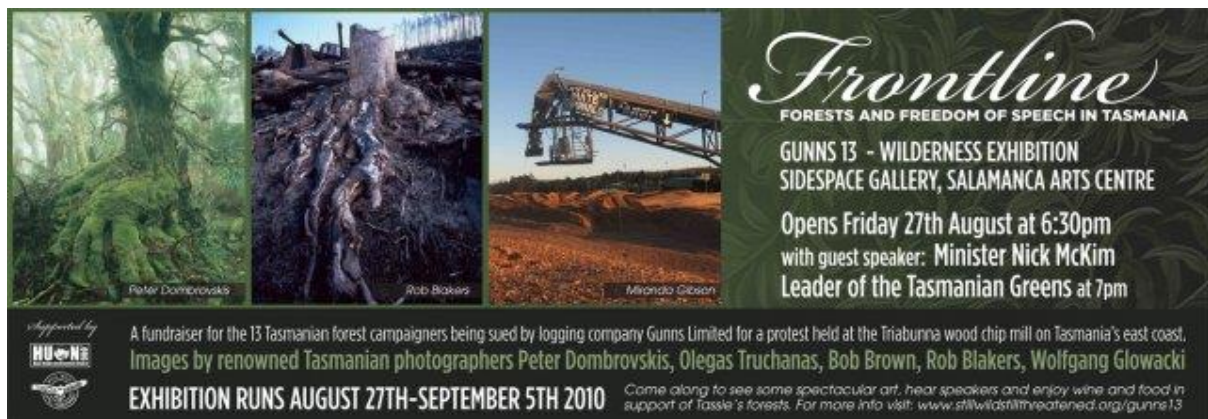


Plate 25 Above: *Frontline*, exhibition invitation, 2010

This chapter defines the scope of festival as a platform for the work. It also examines festival as a way to further highlight art with environmental critique and engage a broader audience spectrum. The project explores alternatives to traditional art spaces that cater for elite audiences in the art-as-commodity and art industry regimes.

As a result of questions that arose when considering how to optimise site-specificity and expansion of new audiences, the project expanded to festivals underpinned by alternative discourses, practices and sensibilities. Eco-festival sites became an additional platform for installation art with an environmental sustainability discourse.

Art festivals and eco-festivals are discussed first in an historical context, followed by specifics of the sites utilised for this project. The specific sites and festivals included in the project are; Florentine Valley, Be My Florentine Cabaret, (2009); Townsville Strand Ephemera, (2009); Jackeys Marsh, Forest Festival Art Trail, (2008, 2010, 2012);

Launceston Streets Alive, (2011); *Guerrilla Projections*, as a fringe event of Ten Days On The Island, (2011) and Marion Bay Falls Festival, (2010, 2011, 2012).

### **From Studio to Site**

Works made in situ, out of the studio, have been the subject of discourses by Claire Doherty, Daniel Bruen and Miwon Kwon. Claire Doherty discusses works that are 'situated' rather than studio-based and the 'tendencies and implications of the shift from studio to site'. Here, Doherty submits new terms defining site- specificity, such as 'context-specific', 'site-responsive' and 'socially engaged'. This is not work produced in a studio, the new concern is where the work is situated or the context is the starting point of artistic practice (Doherty, 2004, p 7 - 12). In an historical context, art in landscape, as already mentioned previously, was pioneered by Earth artists, notably, Robert Smithson who also coined the phrase, 'site-specific'. History also records that Environmental sculpture is a twentieth-century art form intended to involve or encompass the spectators rather than merely to face them. Practitioners of Land-art, Earth-art or Earth-works and Environmental art, pioneered the deploying of art in landscape in a contemporary context. Working in landscape provided a critical framework for reaction to the perceived artificiality, Plastic Arts aesthetics and commercialisation of art.

(<http://www.saylor.org/site/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/Land-Art.pdf>, p 1)

### **Art in the public sphere: Biennales and Community Arts Festivals**

The Land art, Earthworks and Environmental art movements were not associated with art biennale culture, but it is suggested in *The New Situationists*, (Doherty, 2004, p7), that it has influenced interest and underpinned site-orientated practices that are now part of the contemporary sculpture trail and biennale culture. Mediating site in landscape in this way at this time was employed as a strategy to move away from traditional art exhibition spaces and old art regimes. During the last few decades, the number of festivals, both nationally and globally has expanded. Contemporary festivals are considered post – traditional festivals, (Giorgi, Sassatelli, 2011, p 2, 4), contextualised within a long social history of cultural festivals. These events may draw international, national or local artists, depending on their scope. More often than not, they are specific to a single town or region, and can be held once only or regularly, for example, annually, biennially, triennially and so on. Depending on festival guidelines, you may or may not be able to buy art at the event. Working in varying locations and festivals, exposing a broader spectrum of audience to installation art is central to this project.

The idea of site response and site transition is explored by Miwon Kwon in *One Place After Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity* (2002, p 46). Kwon describes Francis Alys as ‘one of a burgeoning number of nomadic artists’. Site-orientated practices that mobilise the site as a discursive narrative used the context of biennale culture. The idea that there can be a seamless relocation of works to new sites is noted by Kwon. (Doherty, 2004, p9-10).

Biennale festival culture, as a platform for artists, is discussed in *Contemporary Art – From Studio to Situation* (2004), and further elaborated in *Festivals and the Cultural Sphere*, (Giorgi, Sassatelli and Delaney, 2011). They explore festival allied with contemporary social, cultural and economic growth. There are many community art festivals where visual art is either the (or a main) component. These festivals are often about ‘The Arts’ in an encompassing sense. Some also have indoor art exhibits, outdoor stages, music, dance, street performers and can offer a wide variety of ethnic foods and products.

The following community art festivals were used as platforms for trials of works in this project.

### **Townsville Strand Ephemera, 2009**

First held in 2001, Strand Ephemera is a biennial outdoor sculpture festival and community arts event. It is held along the two kilometre Strand recreational area in Townsville, offering a major exhibition, workshops, artist talks and performances. Strand Ephemera is organised by Gallery Services, Townsville City Council and attracts about seventy thousand local, national and overseas visitors. This exhibition facilitates installation in landscape outside the traditional gallery setting. Interaction with the general public is expanded through artist talks on site and community workshops.

Pursuing platforms for environmental installation art independent of the artist collective, *Shadows*, led to participation in Townsville Strand Ephemera community arts event in 2009. This site was outside the local Tasmanian context and was intended to increase and diversify audience exposure to this work. Made in response to Tasmanian socio-environmental politics, re-location inevitably resulted in a re-contextualisation of the work. Environmental issues resulting from land management are not exclusive to Tasmania, of course, so the work and the discourse translated easily to the Townsville site. British colonisation of land, linked to contemporary land use and degradation, was central to the discourse in *Overlayunderlay*, and not exclusive to Tasmania.



Plate 26

Townsville Strand  
Ephemera, 2009,  
Community  
workshop.

Photo: J Anglesey

The Strand Ephemera festival facilitated the exposure of a new audience to environmental critique. While some places could highlight didactic and locate artworks within a local environmental activist context, art made in any space was a form of colonisation of land and, in itself, a metaphor. *Overlayunderlay* therefore, retained the integrity of the didactic when situated in any gentrified location. This platform facilitated interaction with a different public and the scope for further activism.

The Strand Ephemera festival did not specifically underpin environmental critique, but did facilitate the opportunity to explore a broader public interaction outside Tasmania. In this festival, the ephemeral nature of this work challenged audience preconceptions of contemporary art and arts practice. The location served to highlight environmental discourses that are applicable everywhere. It was apparent by audience reaction that Tasmania's environmental battles were not well publicised outside the state.

### ***Ten Days On The Island and Shadows In The Water***

*Ten Days On The Island* is proclaimed to be the largest biennial international arts festival in Australia. The first event was in 2001 and it has since grown to include around two hundred events in more than forty locations across Tasmania. This multi-art form program includes dance, theatre, music, opera, film, literature, exhibitions and installations, inspiring discussions, gastronomic feasts and much more.

In 2005, a group of like-minded Tasmanian artists sought to voice their environmental critique through a fringe project during Ten Days On The Island, 2005. This involved taking part in an ephemeral sculpture trail at Upper Blessington. The exhibition, *Shadows in the Water*, provided a platform for an ephemeral sculpture trail exploring ways in



which art can be used as environmental activism and environmental critique can be expressed. The setting was a small farm adversely affected by forestry logging practices. As mentioned in the introduction, exhibitions standing outside the Ten Days On The Island festival were in themselves, art activism highlighting Tasmanian eco-political issues.

Participation in events facilitated through this group from 2005 to 2008, provided crucial background practical research resulting in defining the scope of this study. These events took the more traditional form of art trails into the public sphere, some of which were loosely attached to various community arts festivals. From 2009 the group known as *Shadows* (taken from the title of the first exhibition in 2005) sought to make its work more accessible to the public.

The first group sculpture trail, *Shadows In The Water*, held at Upper Blessington in 2005, had limited public exposure. Only a few viewers travelled to the site; a community bus was suggested but never eventuated because of limited financial resources. The most significant and primary outcome of this collective exhibition was a CD, *Shadows In The Water*. Maquettes of the project were installed in *Arts Alive* exhibition space in Launceston, to share the artists' concerns with a greater number of the public. The issues of Launceston's drinking water, the silting of water catchments and the proposed Tamar Valley Pulp Mill and were presented to a local audience. To further highlight this environmental discourse, other exhibitions of this work were trialled as ephemeral sculpture exhibitions. One of these was at Kings Park, Launceston, at the nexus of the three rivers that join to make the Tamar River and another at Pilots Station Reserve, Low Head, at the mouth of the Tamar River. Sites were selected as specific to the didactic of the works and relied on audience to travel to the site.

### **Streets Alive, 2011**

Streets Alive Community Arts Festival is held every two years in Launceston, Tasmania. This community arts festival utilises the whole town as the site and encompasses Launceston's community including local and national artists, schools and disability groups. It involves a range of visual and performing arts. The community sees transformation of public spaces with artworks including exhibits of children's art in supermarkets and shopfront windows. Local theatres and an entertainment marquee provide a variety of live entertainment and fill the town with artistic activity for a week. Participation in the Launceston Streets Alive Arts Festival provided a platform for my work to be more exposed to another audience.

In 2011 the theme for the art trail was ‘sustainability’ and addressed environmental issues inviting artists to respond. As a participating artist in this festival, my exploration utilised recycled materials and focused on adages, truisms and the overlooked sustainable lifestyle culture movement of the 1960s and 1970s. Within the urban landscape of Launceston’s Brisbane Street Mall, the site chosen to install the work was the Birchalls Bookshop front display window. This provided an opportunity for critical analysis of ‘sustainability’ to a different audience which satisfied one of the aims of the project (expansion to a broader audience).

### **Eco-Festival as a New Platform for Ephemeral Installation for Environmental Critique**

Festival space as ‘green’ space and the growth of eco-politics has developed as an aspect of the contemporary music festival. An early example is Woodstock (1969), a monumental music festival where more than half a million people came together and united in a message of peace, openness and cultural expression. This demonstrated how a generation could be heard. The current producers carry forward the original Woodstock ethos by identifying social, environmental and political causes, organising communities around them, developing products for those communities and encouraging creative expression.



Plate 27 Above: Woodstock Poster, 1969



Plate 28 Above: Woodstock, 1969

Woodstock is still committed to living by its principles, which include universal human rights, ethical business practices, unfettered creative expression, free trade, the loving care of the planet, the power of the individual to make a difference and the overwhelming impact of communities to act as agents of peaceful change (<http://www.woodstock.com/>, Roberts, Rosenman, Lang, 2013). This is linked to the emergence of the ‘hippie’

counterculture in the 1960s due to the ideals at the time including 'back to the land' communes. They suggest that the carnival qualities of the festival space may lend themselves to the free flow of alternative discourses, practices and sensibilities. Joanne Cummings, Ian Woodward and Andy Bennett in *Festivals and the Cultural Public Sphere* (2011), in *Festival spaces, green sensibilities and youth culture* write about festival culture, (p 142-155). Dr Joanne Cummings is also the author of *Neotribal Society and Linking Images at Australian Music Festivals*, (2006), and *We're All In This Together : The Meaning Australian Festivalgoers Attribute to their Music Festival Participation* (2007), and is conducting research at five music festival sites, inclusive of the Falls Festival. She indicates that the music festival industry is a front runner with experimentation with sustainable sources of energy and promotion of the carbon neutral idea as part of the festival experience.



Plate 29 Woodstock, 1969. Photographer unknown

It should be noted that the counter cultural movement of the sixties itself represented the 'rebirth of a Dionysian culture, which possesses deep historical roots in Romanticism, early utopian socialism and anarcho-syndicalism communitarianism' (Musgrove, 1974, p 12). In Australia, communitarianism has a long history (Metcalf 1986: Ch.3) The 1960s witnessed a momentous youthful avalanche of spontaneous actions taken up in opposition to what he calls the consolidation of a technocratic totalitarianism (Roszak, 1968, xli). Conventional religion, gender relations, work practices, the nuclear family, reductionist science, allopathic medicine, the corporate media, leisure pursuits and mass consumption practices became subject to an unprecedented cultural assault (St John, 2000, p 67).

Eco-festivals became another platform for the works trialled in this project. As part of an examination of an overall alternative to contemporary exhibition regimes and contributed to the contextualisation of the work at these sites as more 'activist', 'alternative' or 'edgy'. Being open to experimentation with a variety of sites and audience resulted in a shift in

2008 from trials exclusively in biennale-style arts festivals with art as a main focus, to installation in eco- festivals as an alternative platform for ephemeral art with environmental critique.

### **The Jackeys Marsh Forest Festival**



Plate 30

Jackeys Marsh  
Forest Walks Eco-  
Lodge and Forest  
Festival Site, 2012

Photo: J Anglesey

Jackeys Marsh is a valley situated approximately fifty kilometres south-west of Launceston. Western Tiers. It was the site for a population of residents who were seeking alternative lifestyles in the early 1970s. The Jackeys Marsh Forest Festival has a twenty-five year history and a reputation for providing participants with a wide variety of experiences from cave tours to world heritage walks, workshops on sustainability and natural healing, and many kinds of musical genres in three differently themed concerts. In order to assist in the reduction of green-house gases resulting from attendance at the festival, it is run with sustainable power sources and a dominant ‘green’ ethos.

Historically, the Jackeys Marsh Forest Festival is can be positioned within the early alternative lifestyle movement which occurred in Deloraine and the surrounding area in the early 1970s. Cheap land was purchased by a population of alternative life-stylers seeking rural locations which included Jackeys Marsh and neighbouring Wiiteena. I was a part of this counter-cultural movement and lived in Jackeys Marsh from 1975 to 1979. David Holmgren, who was co-author of the first publication on Permaculture, was also a resident of the area. We were both a part of a group who organised one of the early *Down To Earth* festivals in January 1979. This was the first eco-festival, held in Tasmania. ([trove.nla.gov.au/result?q=subject%3A%22Down+to+Earth%22](http://trove.nla.gov.au/result?q=subject%3A%22Down+to+Earth%22), 2012)





Plate 31 and Plate 32

Left and Below:

Jackeys Marsh Forest Festival, 2012  
Photos: J Anglesey



This is mentioned here to contribute to the context in which environmental critique is applied in the work at this site. The direct roots of the Down to Earth ConFest are located on the festival history website ([www.confest.com](http://www.confest.com)). This tribute web site acknowledges the late Dr Jim Cairns' instrumental role in founding the first Down to Earth festival, in December 1976. The first Down to Earth festival was instigated by Cairns after the socially progressive Australian Labour Party of the day, headed by Gough Whitlam, was sacked by the Governor General on the eleventh of November 1975. This history contributed greatly to the development of the Jackeys Marsh Forest Festival. ([www.dte.org.au/](http://www.dte.org.au/), 2012)

The Jackeys Marsh Forest Festival is small and limited to three thousand patrons. The infrastructure is minimal and the site affords a nature experience that influences and permeates. The secure continuation of this festival site is made possible because it is held on privately owned land. The permanent residents, Rosemary Norwood and Sean

Cadman, are integral to the organisation of the Forest Festival. They are keen to support environmental critique installation art as part of the Forest Festival. The Forest Walks Lodge Art Trail is now an integral part of their Eco-Tourist business, (www.forestwalkslodge.com). Time spent at this site was central to influencing the environmental critique and was the first exploration of eco-festival as platform for the works. Three works underwent development at this site and are discussed in detail in the next chapter.

### **Upper Florentine Valley, Be My Florentine Cabaret, 2009**

The second eco-festival used as a platform for installation art with environmental critique was a one-off, small exhibition, *Shadows In The Water*, at the Upper Florentine Valley Blockade in early 2009. This was the site of the first *Rainbows* exploration and is discussed in Chapter Four.

The Upper Florentine Valley in Tasmanian temperate rainforests is described by scientists as among the rarest ecosystems in the world. The Florentine Valley has the longest running blockade in Tasmania, beginning in 2006, with independent activists from The Tasmanian Wilderness Society and re-established by activists from Still Wild Still Free, Still Wild Still Threatened, in 2007.



Plate 33

Miranda Gibson: 2013  
Miranda has been at the top of the tree since December 14th 2011.

The Florentine Valley has the longest running blockade in Tasmania, beginning in 2006.



Plate 34

Left: Upper Florentine Valley  
Blockade, 2009

Photo: J Anglesey



Plate 35

Left: Eco-Activist Rock Cairn  
Sculpture for Be My Florentine  
Cabaret, 2009

Photo: J Anglesey

*Shadows in the Forest*, (the first exploration of art activism included as part of this project), was installed by four members of the *Shadows* collective in support of the conservation of Tasmanian old growth forests in the Upper Florentine Valley. The activists from Still Wild Still Threatened, at the blockade held an annual festival called Be My



Florentine Cabaret. Our group was invited to install work at the blockade to coincide with the second of these festivals in 2009. This annual festival was held in support of the activists and an opportunity for the public to engage with the site.

The audience and site for this exhibition differed from the previous *Shadows in the Water* sculpture trails. Retitled *Shadows in the Forest* for this event, the works were installed at the environmental activism frontline to enhance the site and support the dedicated activists. This festival had not previously included installation art. An experimental work *Rainbows* was designed for ease of installation and simplicity of concept. Considerations were necessary regarding unpredictable circumstances surrounding the blockade. This site highlighted activism and the importance of the tree to environmental discourse.



Plate 36

Left: *Bust*, Camp Florentine, 2013

Unknown Photographer

Plate 37

Below: *Raid*, Camp Florentine, 2008

Unknown Photographer



Flexibility, adaptability, and capacity to work quickly were key factors at this location. There was a high level of tension amongst the activists. Their living circumstances were extremely harsh; basic camps hidden in the forest near the blockade and it was wet much of the time. In protest, the forestry road was blocked with buried cars and when invaded by police or forestry workers, activists would chain themselves inside the cars or climb into the tree-sits. Other activists would find discreet locations in the surrounds to record the raids as testament to the violations. The activists' stories can be further understood by watching, *The Upper Florentine Trilogy*, on the social media site, YouTube ([www.youtube.com/watch?v=LlrdvYr6wvQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LlrdvYr6wvQ), [www.youtube.com/watch?v=vZ9MHIZJchE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vZ9MHIZJchE), [www.youtube.com/watch?v=gQd-N4O25Bs](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gQd-N4O25Bs)).

The tree-sits had networks of criss-crossing ropes between trees and spanning the road, making unintentional but spectacular visual impact. As light relief from an otherwise very serious and dramatic lifestyle, some activists joined the artists and installed small sculptural rock cairns along the road. Time was spent exploring the site, engaging with the activists and witnessing destruction of the forest and associated violence. The protest action triggered personal emotional responses inspiring a desire to support the protest and support the fight to stop the destruction, protect the forest and the activists themselves. Their commitment to the cause was admirable.

Responding to these nuances of the site, the idea that a 'lucky talisman' (in this instance a circle and spiral brightly coloured in vibrant rainbow spectrum palate) served to inject a positive contribution to activists in the blockade. The genesis of *Rainbows* is mentioned here as a note, because the site inspired this idea which later proved to be important in this project, and the most repeated at different sites.

The exhibition at the Blockade ended after two weeks, with an invasion of the site by local police. Working in an eco-terrorism site, highlighted and contextualised the environmental critique in the work within current environmental activist context ([www.tasmaniantimes.com/.../tasmania-police-raid-florentine-blockade](http://www.tasmaniantimes.com/.../tasmania-police-raid-florentine-blockade), <http://www.myspace.com/video/still-wild-still-threatened/forest-activists-attacked-in-the-upper-florentine-valley-tassie/45007754>, <http://www.earthfirstjournal.org/article.php?id=443>).

Although this exhibition was attached to eco-activism and exposed to a different audience, as with the early exhibitions prior to 2009, the Be My Florentine Cabaret had a select audience with concurring views in support of environmental conservation.

## Marion Bay Falls Festival

Continuing the eco-festival platform, artworks were installed at Falls Art and Music Festival at Marion Bay in south-eastern Tasmania, a forty minute drive from Hobart. These artworks were situated within a large 'engine' of preparation and infrastructure that, at its height, is populated by some 15,000 people, and caters for camping, food, beverage and non-stop entertainment from the twenty-ninth of December to the first of January every year. The Falls Festival is underpinned by a 'green' environmental policy and recycles all the waste products produced by the event (Delanty, Giorgi, Sassatelli, 2011, p142, 148, 149). This and many other similar festivals, combine the popular culture music concert with the remnants of anarchy demonstrated at Woodstock. The Falls Music and Arts Festival celebrated its twentieth anniversary in Lorne, Victoria and its tenth anniversary at Marion Bay in 2012.

Cummings, Woodward and Bennett state that festivals are a critical audience base that consists of young people between the ages of 18 and 26 (p 144). In 2004, the Australian-based National Youth Affairs Research Scheme, (NAYRS) conducted research into the relationship between sustainable consumption and young Australians and identified music festivals and young people as agents for social change (Bentley *et al.* 2004).



Plate 38

Marion Bay Falls  
Festival, 2012

The participating artists are situated within a large 'engine' of preparation and infrastructure that runs a festival that, at its height, has a captive audience of some 15,000 people.

Photo: J Anglesey

Art at the Falls Festival has, historically, been confined to The Village and New Year's Eve gala parade. Traditionally, art at music festivals have been centred round carnival and the theatrical aspects of these events. Ephemeral installations with environmental critique began at this festival in 2010, specifically at the Marion Bay Falls site. Some members of the *Shadows* art collective used the opportunity as another platform for exhibiting work



with environmental critique to a wider spectrum of the community. The idea that an eco-festival highlighted the critique in the works was explored at Falls. The number of participating artists who have contributed artwork at this site has increased over the last three years and has spread to include many areas of the vast site.

Glass is banned at the Falls Festival and is confiscated at the entry gate and drugs and pets not tolerated. All consumables are purchased on site and the products of composting toilets left on site for composting. Power is generated on site for the event. The farm, used to host the festival, is partially allocated to a nature reserve, regenerating forests and managed in an eco-friendly way. Festival participants camp for the duration of the festival and from the twenty-ninth of December, minimal vehicle movement is permitted on site, so everyone walks the approximately ten square kilometre festival site.

As part of the Falls Festival, the participating artists from the *Shadows* artist collective are situated within a large 'engine' of preparation and infrastructure. This and many other similar festivals combine popular culture with a green ethos.

The *Rainbows* work has been installed at three different locations, over three years at this festival. This facilitated the refinement of the installation processes, materials and colour palette used to make the work. The Falls Festival makes for interesting and challenging work conditions for art making.



Plate 39

Marion Bay Falls Festival, 2012

Photo: J Anglesey

Other records of this event can be seen on the social network site Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/FalloutACreativeProjectForFallsFestival2012?fref=ts>,

[https://www.facebook.com/officialfallsmusicandarts/photos\\_stream](https://www.facebook.com/officialfallsmusicandarts/photos_stream),  
<http://2012.fallsfestival.com.au/>, (2013).

### **Eco-Festivals as platform**

The diverse audience facilitated by different eco-festivals satisfied the aim to expose art with environmental critique to a broader demographic. Using a variety of festival sites presented numerous formal challenges and they provided many valuable opportunities to refine the works.



## Chapter Four

### *The Works*

#### **Art in the Public Domain**

There are many ways to interpret and express environmental concerns through art and includes exhibitions in traditional contemporary gallery settings. However, an outdoor exhibition where art is placed in the public domain was the focus of this project. Nicholas Tsoutas refers to art in public spaces as an open and public space where communities can come together in a productive and transparent environment to discuss the positions and cultural models constructed by artists and cultural thinkers in a way that transforms our understandings of each other. Tsoutas talks about contemporary visual practice being about creating a space for dialogue and knowledge that has the capacity to challenge our understandings of the world we live in and the diversity of cultures that construct it. He says, “Contemporary art creates a propositional space....the space that we share, inhabit and co-exist in, and of a commitment to the inclusivity of a range of voices, positions and cultures.” (Tsoutas; [http://sydney.edu.au/sca/profiles/Nicholas\\_Tsoutas.shtml](http://sydney.edu.au/sca/profiles/Nicholas_Tsoutas.shtml), 2011). The project explores this concept.

This chapter discusses the development of the ephemeral installations from 2009 to 2013. Ephemeral installations discussed in this chapter are *Overlayunderlay*, (2009), *Wattle Dance*, (2010), *Waist Not-Want Not*, (2011) and *Rainbows*, (2010, 2011, and 2012). Earlier explorations *Lest We Forget*, (2005), *Paper and Gum*, (2008 - 2013) and the *Rainbows* prototype, (2009), are also discussed.

Installation of the works at a variety of locations allows for formal challenges that respond to the variables of site. This includes size of works, context, concept development and materials. The locations of the works for this project includes the Upper Florentine Valley, (2009), Townsville Strand, (2009), Marion Bay, (2010, 2011, 2012), and Jackeys Marsh, (2010, 2012). The discussion in this chapter encompasses formal considerations, concept development, the strategies used in each work that relate to the environmental critique, how materials were used to underpin the critique, how site influenced the works, how festival influenced the development of works and audience interaction.

## ***Shadows In The Water and Lest We Forget, 2005***

**‘Act local think global’, (Geddes, 1915)**

‘The cooperation of the world’s policymakers, land managers, and other stakeholders in land management at local, regional and global scales is essential.’ (Ellis, E; <http://www.eoearth.org/view/article/154143/>, 2010)

A loose, events based collective of artists, *Shadows*, facilitated opportunities to explore ephemeral installations focusing on environmental critique at different sites in four ephemeral outdoor art exhibitions. These took place prior to this project at Upper Blessington, (2005), the waterfront at Royal Park, Launceston, (2007), Pilots Point at the mouth of the Tamar River, (2007) and Jackeys Marsh, (2008).

From 2009 to 2013, the research into this thematic continued. Some trials were conducted in Townsville and Launceston, independent of the *Shadows* collective, to explore the potential scope of audience engagement. These investigations exposed other sections of the public sphere to the environmental discourse and didactic in the work.

In 2005, a group of Tasmanian artists, *Shadows*, made works for an ephemeral exhibition focused on environmental critique. The exhibition was titled *Shadows in the Water* and took place at a small farm that was becoming surrounded by eucalypt plantations and clear-fell logging coups. The site typified the topic. The farm was experiencing water degradation from nearby clear felling operations in Upper Blessington, which is part of the large Macquarie Basin water catchment. The water from this catchment eventually makes its way to the South Esk River then flows into the Tamar River at Launceston. This water is used as Launceston’s drinking water supply. The streams that provided water to the Upper Blessington property had become choked with silt that was washing downstream from clear-felling.

The work made for this exhibition was titled, *Lest We Forget*, making reference to the loss of trees and biodiversity. This was my first exploration of art with environmental discourse. After this experience, using art in landscape to voice environmental activism became central to my practice.

Using a farm and landscape as the site for this exhibition led to exploring the idea of a critique of land colonisation. To express the idea of a relationship between colonisation and present land degradation, a faux floor cover was used as a metaphor. Made in a check pattern, it mimicked the surrounding eucalypt plantations.



Plate 40

*Lest We Forget*, 2003, river silt and sawdust found on site, 10m by 10m, detail

Photo: J Anglesey

The materials used were sawdust and gravel. They were on hand, as the site chosen for *Lest We Forget* was in close proximity to the stream and there was also a pile of old sawdust nearby. The work was left in situ after the exhibition to biodegrade, leaving no trace of the work over time. This was a sustainable way to practice art that supported environmental critique.

Photographs and short film were evidence and the product of this exhibition. Although an invaluable exercise, recorded evidence was not first-hand experience of the work and did not facilitate much audience participation.

The idea of expressing environmental critique as an overlay on land was revisited in 2009 and resulted in the later work *Overlayunderlay*. Located on the Townsville Strand, the silt and sawdust was replaced with grass paint and flour creating a colour palette of black and white to highlight the critique.

## **The Tree**

There is much evidence that alteration of land and tree cover can have global consequences. Local solutions to global problems are a way to action on feelings of powerlessness.

Making art to voice an opinion was a way to be actively sharing this conviction. Landscape and installation on site presents different challenges to working in a studio and provides stimulus that contributes to the development of ideas and execution of concepts. The focus on the tree increased as the project developed.

### **Jackeys Marsh – *Paper and Gum* 2008 – 2011**

In 2008, the *Shadows* collective was invited to exhibit work at the Jackeys Marsh *Forest Festival*. The addition of a walking experience in the bush was explored as another way to engage the viewer with environmental activism and explored at the Jackeys Marsh Forest Festival Art Trail site. Unlike previous trials, this exhibition was attached to a festival that supported an environmental ethos. It is held where the residents and hosts of the festival, Rosemary and Sean Cadman, are practicing sustainable living.

Environmental critique was expressed in the form of a tree covering that biodegraded over time. The work was titled *Paper and Gum*, to refer to the proposed Tamar Valley Pulp Mill, forest clear-fell logging, wood-chipping and pulping for the paper industry.

The curatorial instructions were, at this time, to install work around the edges of the festival site. I chose the entrance of the Forest Walk Art Trail, still visible from the main festival area to highlight the bush and walking trail. Examiner newsprint paper was recycled into hand-made, embossed, A3 and A4 sheets. These were painted to look like copper and attached to the trunk of a small gum sapling at the entrance to the Forest Trail.

This work explored natural growth. It also made reference to the use of trees for paper in an ironic way. This was demonstrated by the use of recycled newsprint paper to cover the sapling tree trunk, knowing the paper would weather and tear as the tree grew. Assisted by rain and temperature fluctuations, the work biodegraded and eventually disappeared in 2012. This work drew attention to the tree as a living entity and the natural processes of growth and decay became part of the work.

The Forest Festival, (2008), was the first opportunity to explore art with environmental discourse in an eco-festival. The site and festival underpinned the environmental view point. It also allowed access to a site with longer time frames to consider the work.





Plates 41, 42 and 43

Above Left: *Paper and Gum*, 2003, Tiger Hill Café, Golden Valley, TAS

Above Right: *Paper and Gum*, 2008, Jackeys Marsh Forest Festival Art Trail entrance

Left: *Paper and Gum*, 2010, Jackeys Marsh Forest Festival Art Trail After two years in situ, as the paper bio-degrades the tree sheds it like bark.

Materials: Recycled news-print paper, acrylic paint.

Photo: J Anglesey

The tree took three years to complete the cycle of shedding the paper cover. In 2012 the final remnants of paper were gone, giving it a measurable ephemeral lifespan of four years. The work is refreshed every four years.



## ***Overlayunderlay – 2009***

‘Art in landscape is sometimes referred to as Environmental art, defined as a ‘20<sup>th</sup> century art form intended to involve or encompass the spectators rather than merely to face them; the form developed as part of a larger artistic current that sought to break down the historical dichotomy between life and art.’, ( Beardsley, 1998, p 127)

*Overlayunderlay* was trialled at a Townsville Strand Ephemera in 2009 which facilitated a different audience demographic and returned to a focus on land management as environmental critique.

Links between land sovereignty, colonisation of land, subsequent land use and contemporary environmental issues are central to this work. This work revisited the idea that colonisation could be symbolised by geometric divisions with a cover over land. *Lest We Forget* contributed to the idea for this work.



Plate 44

*Overlayunderlay*,  
Townsville Strand.  
2009, Council help  
mow and prepare site  
to ready to install.

Photo: J Anglesey

The reference to a ‘colonial overlay’ was very clear with the work made to look like a European carpet. The title made reference to the critique in the work; ‘overlay’ referenced British colonisation of Australia and ‘underlay’ referred to subsequent problems associated with contemporary land use and management. Black and white was chosen as the colour palette to reference the polarisation associated with these discourses.



Plate 45

*Overlayunderlay*, Townsville Strand Ephemera, 2009, black grass paint, white flour, (10m x 5m)  
Photo: J Anglesey

The rose pattern was made by sifting flour through a hand-made stencil, designed from English Tea Rose lace pattern. The straight lines stencils were created using wooden planks from the Townsville Council's work depot. The flour and paint were applied to close mown grass creating black squares bordered by white lines to make reference to indigenous land within colonial tropes.

Flour was chosen to refer to a product of the colonisation of land. Farmers have cleared land in Australia for broad-acre farming extensively since colonisation. The colour white also referenced white Caucasian. The black referred to the traditional owners of Australian land. Each square was separated by grass and the carpet was defined by a white flour border around its perimeter. Fringes created at each end ensured the reference to a carpet was unmistakable. To further reference the idea of a British colonisation of Australia, the carpet mimicked the style of designs used for 1700s floor coverings that were a new addition to domestic society. The years 1700 to 1718 marked the arrival of the floorcloth in Britain and it became an exotic novelty and a constant component of Western material culture. Floral prints, like tea roses, were synonymous with English domestic settings. The style of the overlay purposely referenced the time of the 1700s Industrial Revolution in England that largely drove immigration to Australia (Lemire, 2003, p 82).



The audience was prohibited from walking on this carpet, inverting the usual utilitarian functions of floor-coverings and public space. This prohibition added to the scope of environmental critique encompassing a socio-political narrative.

Viewers had first-hand experience of the work and the availability of artist-on-site for exchange of ideas and discussions which were all aimed at enhancing public engagement with the work.

*Overlayunderlay* was biodegradable and challenged the audience regarding traditional permanency and commodity value of art. The patterns became less visible each day as the grass regrew, and it disappeared over the course of the twelve days.



Plate 46

*Overlayunderlay*, Townsville Strand Ephemera, after seven days biodegrading, 2009.

Photo: J Anglesey

A community workshop was devised to create a second carpet adjacent to the first. This was to involve community in art processes and to compensate for the rapid disappearance of the first work which biodegraded very quickly in the tropical environment. The workshops facilitated more public engagement. The participants in the new work were local school groups and general passers-by.



Plates 47 and 48

Townsville Strand Ephemera Community workshops, 2009 Photos: J Anglesey

This notion of art in the public domain was explored in all the works for the project, but public workshops facilitated more engagement with the public. Accessibility to the artist here helps to demystify contemporary installation practice and the didactic contained in the work.



Plate 49

Townsville Strand Ephemera Community workshops, 2009  
Photo: J Anglesey

*Lest We Forget* and *Overlayunderlay*, highlight nature's restorative powers through a demonstration of ephemera through biodegradability.



## ***Wattle Dance* – 2008, 2010**

In 2010, attention turned to nature's ability to regenerate and restore itself despite human degradation. This was another way to express environmental critique. The concept for *Wattle Dance* emerged from exploring the forest trail at the Jackeys Marsh Forest Festival site. This location was logged in the 1920s, 1940s and again in the 1970s. The once farmed site was being left to regenerate naturally.

In 2008, when walking the trail, I found an unusually deep cover of wattle pods under the old wattle tree stands.

Plate 50

Right: Wattle pods on  
the forest floor, 2008

Photo: J Anglesey



Plate 51

Left: *Wattle Dance* prototype,  
Jackeys Marsh Forest Festival  
Art Trail, 2008

It seemed the wattle trees at this location possessed foreknowledge of the seasons and an inherent knowledge of their own sustainability code. It has been now observed that this



phenomenon of prolific seed production has not reoccurred since 2008 and was unique to the season.

I harvested enough wattle pods in 2008 to develop this idea for the next Forest Festival in 2010. The pods collected were enough to utilise for a larger version of the work. This time, the work was in a different place on the trail. The installation included five showers of threaded pods on old wattle trees attached to horizontal branches on different trees in the vicinity. The lines of threaded pods accentuated the shapes of the branches. The work was visually subtle because the materials blended tonally into the background landscape. The sunlight, however, reflecting on the straight lines of gold beading thread was noticeable enough to draw the viewer closer for further scrutiny.



Plate 52

*Wattle Dance*, Jackeys Marsh Forest Festival Art Trail, 2010. Detail two of five, wattle pods, brass beading wire. Photo: J Anglesey

The experience of the sanctuary of natural forest for the festival audience became central to works made on this site. Music from the festival was audible from the glade where *Wattle Dance*, (2010) was placed and this space was enjoyed by festival goers as a communal respite area. This demonstrated audience response became central to the idea that adding an experience and appreciation of a site in this way could contribute to a connection to nature. The site enhanced appreciation of nature's restorative powers. Response to site, in this instance, inspired the idea that works could express nature processes as environmental critique. The peacefulness of this bush location became

inextricably linked to the work at this site. Spending time in the forest on the trail while making the work, gave me a renewed awe of nature. It was hoped the viewer might experience a similar response.

This work was very fragile and biodegraded quickly.



Plates 53 and 54

Left and Below: *Wattle Dance*, 2009,  
Jackeys Marsh Forest Festival Art Trail,  
details 2 of 5.

Photos: Zsuzsu Stinner



This location highlighted the power of natural regrowth and regeneration. Permanent access to Jackeys Marsh Forest Trail offered time to develop a relationship between the work, site and concept.



In my opinion, public artist talks play an important role in educating the public. This leads to a greater understanding of visual art language and didactics embodied in contemporary installation. Artist talks, part of the program at the Strand Ephemera, were introduced to the Jackeys Marsh Forest Festival Art Trail in 2010. The central purpose of the talks is to stimulate dialogue with the audience. *Wattle Dance* stimulated conversations around nature processes and an environmentally sustainable future. The addition of artists talks as part of both the Strand Ephemera and the Forest Festival exhibition facilitated audience engagement with these works. The observation was made that the Jackeys Marsh Forest Festival audience were more informed regarding environmental issues and receptive to the environmental critique in the work. They also appreciated the beauty and tranquillity of this natural setting. This site offered freedom to enjoy the inspiring and peaceful natural environment without the pressures of time.



Plate 55

Artist Talks at Jackeys Marsh Forest Festival Art Trail, 2012.

Photo: Helen Wills

### ***Waist-Knot-Want- Not, 2011***

In the introduction to *Using Metaphors in Restoring Nature* (2007), Jozef Keulartz discusses George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's *Metaphors We Live By* (1980). He considers metaphors not as merely superficial and superfluous linguistic ornaments, but as indispensable conceptual tools in thinking, talking, and acting. He believes metaphors

perform important cognitive functions, operating as mechanisms for the translation of something abstract into something concrete and shedding light on new and unknown phenomena through familiar ones. He asserts that metaphors are not only important cognitive tools in making sense of the world but also important discursive tools that enable communication and negotiation with others. (Keularz, 2007, p 1)

The title of the work *Waist-Knot-Want-Not* uses a play on words and references bygone times when proverbs, sayings, epigrams, fairy stories, fables and legends were common inscriptions in daily life.

My paternal grandmother constantly engaged authorities and councils with conservation issues and my maternal grandmother continued to live a frugal life-style based on the economies learned through the Great Depression preceding World War II. I was fortunate to spend time watching and learning from these women as they conserved water and power, recycled and harvested and preserved fresh produce from the vegetable patch and orchard.

Adages and truisms such as ‘waste not want not’, ‘a stitch in time saves nine’, ‘don’t throw the baby out with the bath water’, ‘a penny earned is a pound saved’ are just some of the examples where many old fashioned tales make reference to sustainable living practice. I recall clearly the radio play, *The Hitch Hiker’s Guide to the Galaxy*, (Adams, 1978), as a metaphorical tale and parody, referring to global sustainability issues. In Scene One, Arthur Dent, the main character, is found lying in front of the bulldozers, to keep them from demolishing his house. The Earth is to be demolished to make way for a hyperspace by-way. After escaping the demolition of Earth, Arthur says, "You know, it's at times like this, when I'm trapped in a Vogon airlock with a man from Betelgeuse, and about to die of asphyxiation in deep space that I really wish I'd listened to what my mother told me when I was young."

(Ford Prefect): "Why, what did she tell you?"

(Arthur): "I don't know, I didn't listen!"

The statement, ‘I didn’t listen!’ is central to the didactic of this work.

The experimental ‘swinging -sixties’, seventies and ‘opulent eighties’ gave way to the ‘nervous nineties’ and the new millennium accompanied by a visible escalation of anxiety in contemporary society regarding environmental eco-equilibrium and sustainability.

*Waist-Knot-Want-Not* was designed to bring into question why we were still debating and not acting on environmental sustainability solutions. The critique in this work refers to the truism, ‘waste not, want not’ and alludes to social attitudes to finite global resources.





Plate 56

*Waist-Knot-Want-Not*, Birchalls Book Store display window, Brisbane St Mall in Launceston Streets Alive Art Trail, 2011, Tea-bags, tissue paper, calico and borrowed books.  
Photo: J Anglesey

This installation negotiated the urban landscape of Launceston. The work was located in Launceston CBD as part of the local biennial community arts festival, Streets Alive. This meant the festival was attended by an audience not usually exposed to art installation of a critical nature. It was also a departure from work in a nature landscape. The work was installed in Birchalls Bookshop front display window.

A worn and work-stained calico sheet, hung from the ceiling as a backdrop to a dress, constructed from used teabags with numerous books displayed on the shelf below. Tea stained tissue paper obscured the titles and contents of the books, alluding to a cover-up or the seeming invisibility of alternative lifestyle practices common over four decades ago. The books were tied with a stained calico ribbons in a bow to look like gifts. Preciousness was alluded to as the books contained information on alternative lifestyles that were brought to light in the cultural revolution of the 1960s. This was a time when sustainability and alternative lifestyles was a new and promising topic.

The redolence of the tea bags used for this work made references to social activity of a past era. This was when much social interaction and conversation occurred over a cup of tea at social gatherings where many women shared knowledge and skills. Used tea bags, when opened, are also reminiscent of skin. These were used to construct a semi-transparent

dress. The dress had a tight waist band which was intended to make reference to notions of body consciousness and eating disorders common in contemporary western society. This was another reference to support the title and wastefulness in contemporary society. The reference to the tree was present but subtle in this work, indicated only through the use of paper books and tissue paper to cover them.

The audience focused on the tea bag dress commenting on its beauty, not noticing the titles through the opaque book covers on display below the dress. Audience response to this work demonstrates society still is neither listening nor paying attention to detail.

### ***Rainbows 2009***

The initial concept of *Rainbows* was formulated at the very beginning of the project in 2009 at the site of the Florentine Valley blockade. The Upper Florentine Valley blockade experience of 2009 was influential in shifting the focus of the project from contemporary land management, to the tree and conservation as paramount to ecological sustainability. Small festivals were part of blockade culture, and the first *Rainbows* trial was made for the Be My Florentine Cabaret in 2009.

Southern Tasmania's old growth, high conservation value and wilderness forests, occur along the eastern fringe of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage area. Tasmanian temperate rain forests are amongst the rarest ecosystems in the world and the activist group, Still Wild Still Threatened, fights for their sustainable management. The battle is central to the survival of earth systems, diversity of species, resources and the protection of old growth forests.

The response to this site inspired a project for this first trial. It was a relatively small kinetic work made from recycled cane and bound with recycled fabric in colours from the rainbow spectrum. The audience was limited to protesters and the community that supported them. Recycled cane was shaped into a circle and a spiral, then wrapped in rainbow colours and connected with swivels so both circle and the spiral within the circle spun in the wind. The reference to the rainbow was reminiscent of Hippies who sometimes used a rainbow flag when marching for peace in the 1960s and 1970s and its biblical reference as a symbol of hope. Also, for the protesters it added colour to the otherwise dark forest and mood at the site.



Plate 57

*Rainbows* at Be My Florentine Cabaret, Upper Florentine Valley Blockade, 2009, cane, recycled fabric.  
Photo: J Anglesey

This was the first exploration with intense rainbow coloured fabric and designed to withstand inclement weather. The rainbow spectrum also referred to air, water and sunlight, upon which life depends. On a formal level it was pleasing to see how well the bright colours contrasted and complemented the soft green tones of the surrounding landscape. At the time, the *Rainbows* prototype was made with the intention of multiplying the number of suspended forms in another larger installation. It was at this time that the idea of wrapping the understory of the forest in some way with swashes of rainbow colours was conceived.

The work was a response to a place where dedicated protesters demonstrated their respect for trees, forests, and environmental eco-cultures. Their ongoing commitment and passion to this cause was admirable. The exhibition at the Blockade ended after two weeks, with an invasion of the site by local police (Tasmanian Times, 2009).

### ***Rainbows, 2010***

Almost two years later, the vision of wrapping the bush with rainbow colours was revisited. This occurred through an invitation to exhibit environmental commentary installation art works at the Marion Bay Falls Music and Arts Festival in 2010. The idea conceived at the Upper Florentine Valley was transferred to a five meter stringy bark eucalyptus tree endemic to Marion Bay.



The first tree wrapping took place with the availability of a boom-lift facilitated by festival infrastructure at the site. This made it possible to wrap branches that were high in the tree. This proved to be an important strategy for the work because it allowed the tree to be noticeable in the large and visually cluttered festival site.



Plate 58

*Rainbows*, First tree wrapping, Falls Festival Marion Bay, 2010  
Photo: J Anglesey

The rainbow spectrum of fabric is applied to the tree in the same order as it would appear in a rainbow, using purple for the base of the tree, moving through the spectrum to red and magenta high in the tree's finer branches. The use of red and magenta high in the tree gives the impression of a rising glow or energy rising from the ground. The fabric is wound meticulously from the base of the tree high into selected branches. The work varies according to each site, and where ever possible, when removed afterwards, recycled for another wrapping.



## Guerrilla Projections, 2011

To coincide again with Ten Days On The Island in 2011, the *Shadows* group gathered for a guerrilla projection project on a random selection of building facades in Launceston. A thirty second video taken of the first *Rainbows* prototype in motion at Upper Florentine Valley blockade in 2009 was combined with an image of the first *Rainbows* installation at Marion Bay Falls Festival, 2010. These were digitally altered and a photo-shopped and animated clip of the same tree was combined to produce a five minute projection for this event. This was then added to other images taken of other artist's work in *Shadows* exhibitions prior to 2011.

Sites in Launceston were selected for suitable vantage points for the projector and ease of access for public viewing by passing public and random onlookers. These included the silos near Gunns Timber processing depot. The projections were held over five consecutive nights at five different locations in Launceston.



Plate 59

Digitally altered image for *Shadows Guerrilla Projections*, J Anglesey, 2011, 1 of 10



Plate 60

Image of *Shadows Guerrilla Projections*, 2011

Photo: J Anglesey

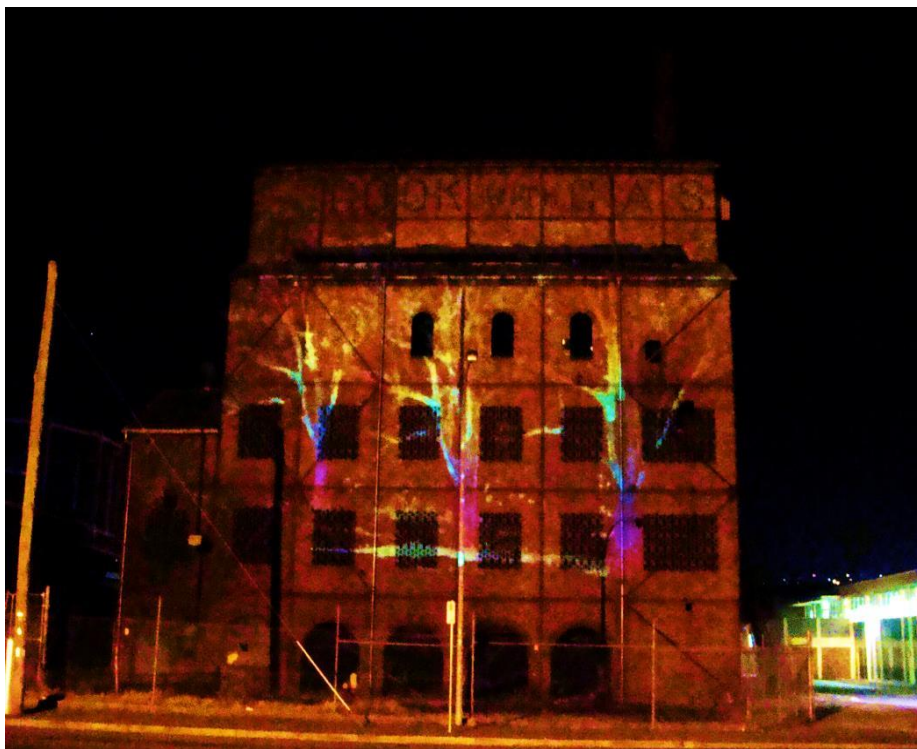


Plate 61

Photo-shopped and animated images were used for the *Shadows Guerrilla Projections*, 2011

Photo: J Anglesey



Plate 62

Shadows *Guerrilla Projections* on the silos near Gunns Timber Processing Depot, 2011 Photo: J Anglesey

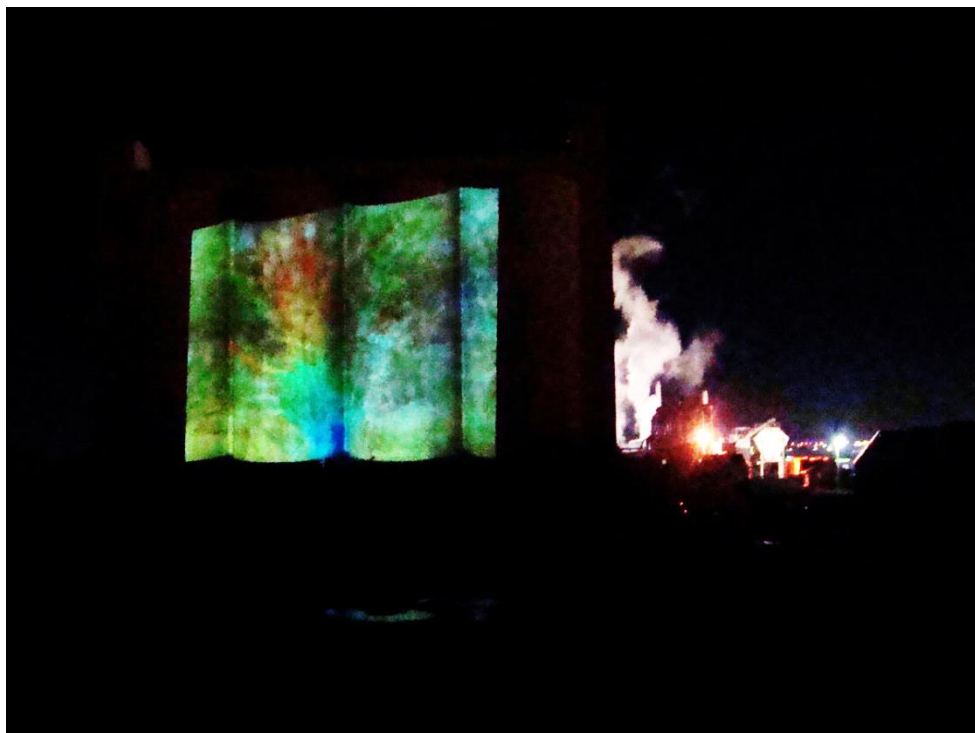


Plate 63

*Guerrilla Projections* on the silos near Gunns Timber Processing Depot, 2011  
Photo: J Anglesey





Plate 64

*Rainbows*, Marion Bay Falls Festival, 2011

Photo: J Anglesey

The intensity of the colours and scale creates a festive quality in this work that is suitable for the New Year celebration. This also translates as a celebration of nature and draws special attention to the trees.

### ***Rainbows, 2012***

The *Rainbow* tree concept translated seamlessly from one site to another. The grand scale necessitated by the large site of the Falls Festival was replaced at Jackeys Marsh with a delicate rendition of *Rainbows*. This time rainbow coloured fabric was installed in a bush glade on the branches of young wattle saplings. The installation experience was very different to that of the Marion Bay site. There was no machinery involved, just a ladder, hand staple gun, scissors and a needle and thread. The Jackeys Marsh installation of *Rainbows* took six days of solo installation. The trees at this location were wattle saplings resulting in the installation being more intimate. The natural bush glade setting, surrounded by only trees and birds, was sheltered, warm and quiet. The eleven trees formed the perimeter of a circle.





Plate 65

*Rainbows*, 2012, Jackeys Marsh Forest Festival Art Trail, detail 3 of 11  
Photo: Jo Anglesey



Plate 66

Left: *Rainbows*, Jackeys Marsh Forest Festival Art Trail, detail, 2012

Photo: Sarah Trousdale

Wrapping the small low branches was meditative and ritualistic. While installing, I became aware of the different inhabitants of the site such as parrots, wrens, currawongs and other birds. There were little gully breezes at certain times of day.

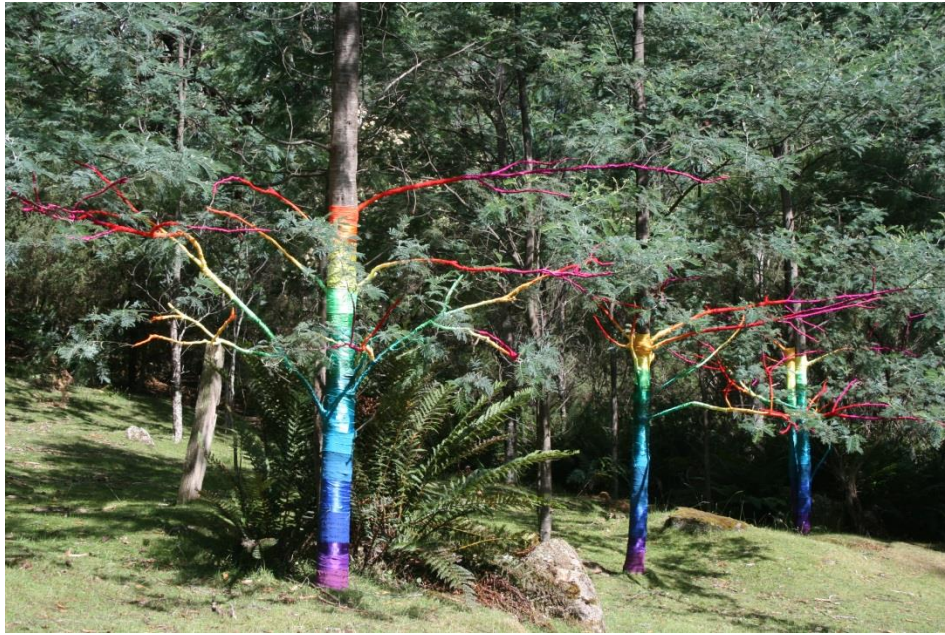


Plate 67

*Rainbows*, 2012, Jackeys Marsh Forest Festival Art Trail, detail 3 of 11.

Photo: Sarah Trousdale

During the Forest Festival, the circle formation of *Rainbow* trees lured the public who sat within the peace of the space. It was possible to lose all sense of time and awareness of the outer world. The Forest Festival specifically celebrates environmental sustainability together with caring, sharing and harmonious co-habitation, so it was satisfying to know this work had captured festival nuances.

*Rainbows* has been in situ since the last Jackeys Marsh Forest Festival in February 2012. Some red and orange colours have faded and others have remained fairly unchanged. This colour variation demonstrates where sun shines through the forest canopy and where it does not.

### ***Rainbows*, 2012**

In 2012, for the third trial of *Rainbows* at the Marion Bay location, the tree chosen for wrapping was situated near the main Valley stage. This trial of the *Rainbows* work further refined the colours and processes. At this stage staples had been minimised and reduced to a very small size. This was to lessen the impact on the tree and had advantages when removing the fabric.

To engage an audience in a vast area, considerations include how big or small a work needs to be to command dominance in a space and whether or not the site visually



enhances the work. The possible grandeur and scale of a location can be demonstrated at the Falls Festival site.



Plate 68

*Rainbows*, Marion Bay Falls Festival, 2012

Working around the edges of the tree with a boom-lift elevated platform facilitated by the festival.

Photo: Will Anglesey

The choice of bright rainbow spectrum fabric wrapping four meters up a gum tree was employed to attract attention. Colour was integral with the carnival aspect of the Falls Festival.



Plate 69

*Rainbows*, Marion Bay Falls Festival, detail, 2011

Photo J Anglesey



The emphasis became the reds and magentas used for the tips. The red and green are complementary and as such the red spectrum at the top of the tree creates a visual explosion. The more subdued purple, blue and green spectrum colours lower on the tree visually ground the work.

Aesthetic decisions are made during installation as to which branches are wrapped, or not, to achieve greatest visual effect. The larger works used up to twenty-seven different colours from the base to the tips of the tree. With a view to create a more seamless colour transition, several colours were deleted and replaced with new colours. This included a hot orange to heighten the red spectrum on the tips of the trees.

The original environmental sustainability discourse contained in the *Rainbows* series was consistent throughout the experiments at different locations, however differing festivals and sites brought a variety of audience associations to the work.



Plate 70

*Rainbows*, Marion Bay Falls Festival, 2012. The tree became a meeting place.

Photo: J Anglesey



Contemporary ephemeral art exhibited as part of these festivals offers art to public who may not otherwise frequent exhibitions, galleries or be exposed to contemporary installation art with environmental sustainability critique. Participation in these events operates as a connection of the work to the wider community. It is through events like the Marion Bay Falls Festival that art with environmental critique can be introduced to a young audience.

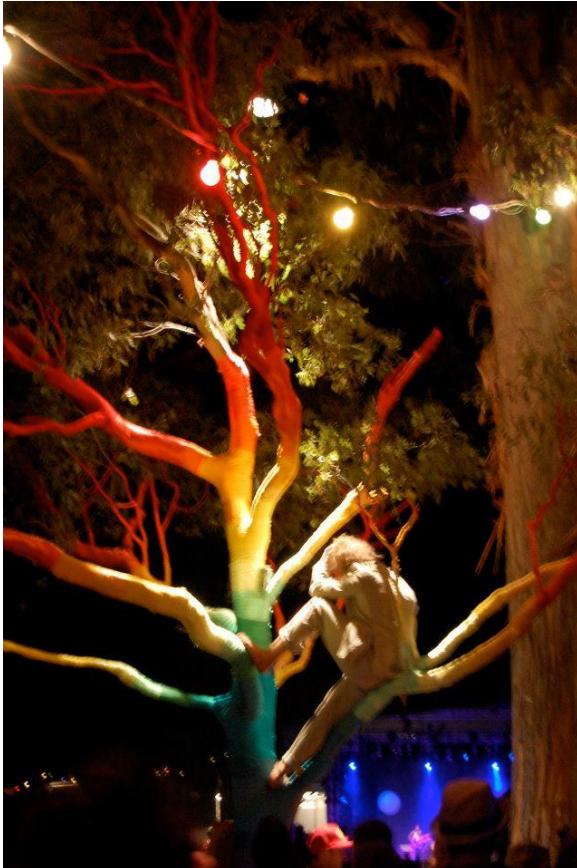


Plate 71

*Rainbows*, Marion Bay Falls Festival, 2012

Picture of New Year's Eve impromptu performance by unknown member of public.

Photo Uploaded from social media, Facebook, *Fallout*, 2013, nd

It is easy to be confident about the safety and durability of the *Rainbows* works even when they are totally accessible to the public. To date, the *Rainbows* works have never been vandalised and have withstood inclement weather conditions and the occasional interloper.

## The Conclusion

The outcomes of this project, within the context of the aims of the project, succeeded in engaging community with ideas of environmental critique through examination of this thematic.

The refinement of concepts and formal artistic concerns were possible, within the context of festival. This provided the platform for activism successfully facilitating contact with broad cross-sections of the public. Situated to engage the general public and facilitate topical debate, the work resonates in a contemporary context and in a community sense, contributing to environmental sustainability discourses and contemporary art practice.

Working within the landscape frame has led to a marriage of site and installation which also highlights the surroundings. It was realised consideration of the site and the scale of the work, within the surrounding landscape, were all of equal importance. These strategies use the same considerations as those used in sculpture and painting.

The opportunity for experimentation and repeated trials of some of the elements, particularly the *Rainbow* concept, has resulted in new discoveries and evolution of the activism through the voice of art. Working in the vast Falls Festival site taught me to embrace the importance of grandeur and large scale work. The challenge presented by a large venue was demonstrated at this site.

*Rainbows* utilised bright colour within this thematic. I determined the development of the use of vibrant colouring for this series was a successful strategy to draw attention to the art work thus preventing the work from getting visually lost. This festival facilitated exposure of new audiences to installation art with environmental discourse. The *Rainbows* work has proven to be the most successful in engaging public.

The project did refine and minimise the ‘carbon footprint’ of the practice to support eco-friendly ethos and sustainability. Both biodegradable and recyclable materials became central to the practice. This also highlighted the non-permanence of art objects and counter aspects of art commodification.

It was determined that the act of installing on site and conducting community workshops as an extension of the work was paramount in the facilitation of greater audience engagement and added to the activism of the work. Working under the overarching theme of eco- festival also increased the scope of new audience.

It was ascertained that the active participation in walking the Forest Art Trail at Jackeys Marsh to view the installations, served to heighten awareness of a connection with nature for the viewer. Location in this case became a way to strengthen the environmental critique and Nature itself became the activist.

Work is ongoing at the Jackeys Marsh site, which is now the permanent home of two ephemeral works, provides a continual source of inspiration and opportunity to experiment. This site contributes to the recognition that ephemeral art works demonstrate nature's recovery and restorative power. This is also reflected in the regenerating Jackeys Marsh site highlighting constant change.

Although the Gunns Tamar Valley Pulp Mill plan has been halted there are many other ecologically threatened sites still occupied by environmental activists who fight to protect fragile eco-systems and bio-diversity in Tasmania, (Tasmanian Wilderness Society, Still Wild Still Free, 2013). These debates create continual opportunities for responses, leading to the creation of environmental activist art. Environmental art is an important component of raising awareness and encouraging public engagement in these discourses.

I still participate in projects with the *Shadows* collective and have recently also become involved with an emerging group of five artists interested in working with recycled materials. We have participated in the *Mad Project*, (Coordinator, Liz Russell-Arnott), (<http://www.examiner.com.au/story/1826417/interest-drummed-up-in-art-at-tip-site/?cs=2575>). This project refers to the *Anthropocene*, a scientific term to describe the effect of man on the geology of the planet that has emerged since the year 1800 (the Industrial Revolution). Russell-Arnott expands this concept to describe art with an eco-sustainability focus.

The scope of opportunities to explore the environmental critique thematic continues to expand beyond this project. *Paper and Gum*, *Wattle Dance* and *Rainbows* are samples of ephemeral works developed in this project and are located on the Forest Walks Art Trail at Jackeys Marsh, Tasmania, for examination.

*Rainbows* and *Paper and Gum* are permanent ephemeral works on the trail. Since first made in 2012, *Rainbows* has been refreshed for examination, (2013), and for the next Forest Festival in 2014. The work demonstrates a combination of new and old. Some weathered fabric has been removed and some replaced since the festival in February 2012. New branches have also been bound expanding the original installation.

*Paper and Gum* has been remade to begin a new biodegrading process. This time the hand painted and moulded, recycled newsprint roll end paper is replaced with unpainted

recycled newspaper. The installation exhibits variations and refinements from its original version and will be extended to include a stand of young gum saplings situated at the first entrance to the Art Trail for the next Forest Festival.



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## **Appendix**

### **Examination Exhibition**

#### ***Paradox as Catalyst***

#### **Jackeys Marsh Forest Walks Lodge Art Trail**

**October 2013**





Plates 72 and 73

*Wattle Dance* in a new location on the Jackeys Marsh Forest Walk Art Trail, 2013.

Brass Wire, Silver Wattle trees and pods.

Photo: Jo Pitchford





Plate: 74

*Wattle Dance* in a new location on the Jackeys Marsh Forest Walk Art Trail, 2013.

Brass Wire, Silver Wattle trees and pods.

Photo: Jo Anglesey





Plates: 75 and 76

*Wattle Dance* in a new location on the Jackeys Marsh Forest Walk Art Trail, 2013.

Brass Wire, Silver Wattle trees and pods.

Photo: Jo Anglesey





Plate 77

*Rainbows, refreshed*, Jackeys Marsh Forest Walk Art Trail, 2013.

Fabric, Silver Wattle trees.

Photo: Jo Pitchford





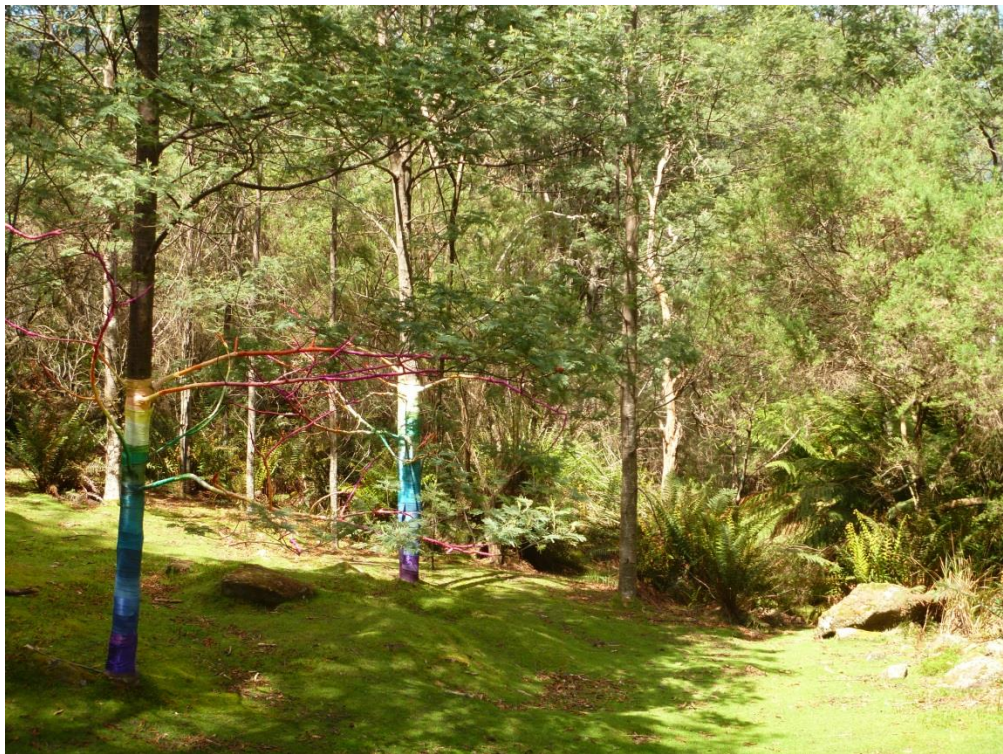
Plates 78 and 79

*Rainbows, refreshed, Jackeys Marsh Forest Walk Art Trail,*

2013 Fabric, Silver Wattle trees.

Photo: Jo Pitchford





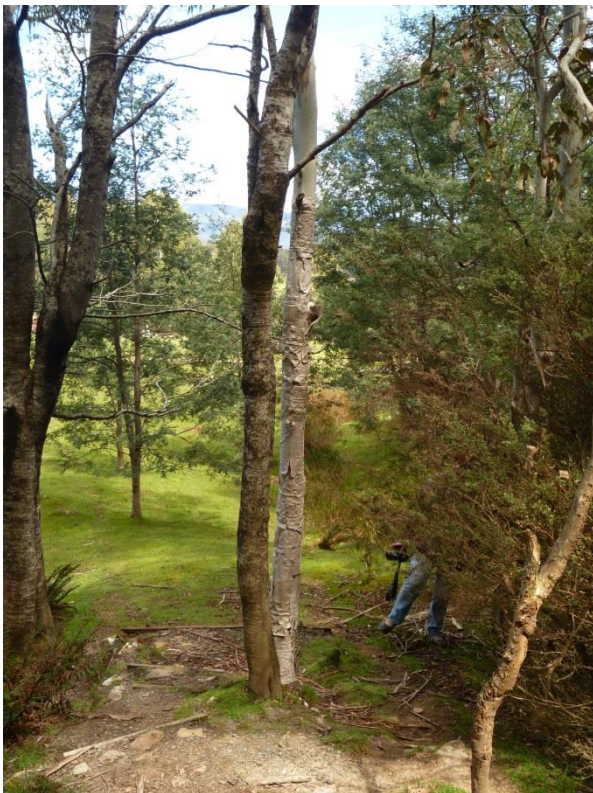
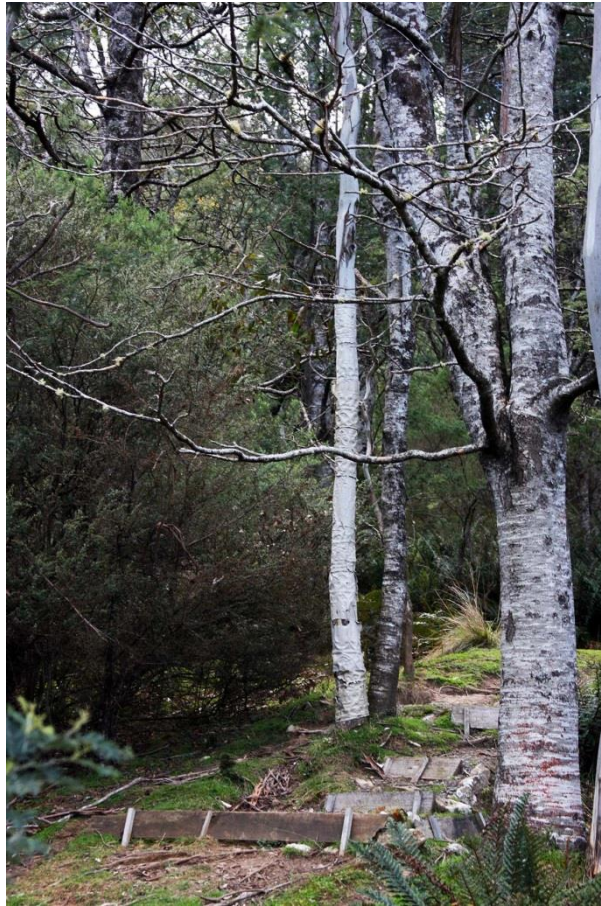
Plates 80 and 81

*Rainbows*, refreshed, Jackeys Marsh Forest Walk Art Trail, 2013.

Fabric, Silver Wattle trees.

Photo: Jo Pitchford





Plates 82 and 83

*Paper and Gum*, refreshed, 2013

Recycled Examiner newspaper,  
Mountain Ash tree.

Photos: Jo Anglesey





Plate 84

*Paper and Gum*, refreshed, 2013

Recycled Examiner newspaper, Mountain Ash tree.

Photo: Jo Anglesey





Plates 85 and 86

*Paper and Gum*, refreshed, 2013

Recycled Examiner newspaper, Mountain Ash tree.

Photos: Jo Anglesey